

THE COERCIVE EFFICACY OF AIR EXCLUSION ZONES:
MYTH OR REALITY?

BY

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES
FOR COMPLETION OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

AIR UNIVERSITY

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

JUNE 2012

APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe thanks to many people without whose support and assistance this study would have floundered. Specifically, however, I want to thank my advisor, Dr. Stephen Wright, for his energy, insight and patience along the way. His support and guidance were invaluable to keep the project on task.

Most importantly, I want to express my sincere appreciation to my family for the love, patience and understanding. Their support throughout this process was immensely important and gave me the freedom to focus on this project when needed. Any success I may achieve is squarely due to their unwavering support.



ABSTRACT

Following U.S. excursions in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is renewed interest in the no-fly, or air exclusion, zone as a coercive instrument. Yet, there is no conclusive agreement over the coercive efficacy of air exclusion zones. Thus, the goal of this study is determine if air exclusion zones are an effective and efficient coercive alternative to major combat operations and, if so, under what conditions. To answer this question, the study compares and contrasts three recent cases, Iraq, Bosnia and Libya, where air exclusion zones were the primary means of coercion. Following this examination, the study concludes that, given certain circumstances, air exclusion zones are an effective and efficient coercive alternative to major combat operations.



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Introduction

Let me make clear what I mean by the region's stability and security. We do not seek the destruction of Iraq, its culture, or its people. Rather, we seek an Iraq that uses its great resources not to destroy, not to serve the ambitions of a tyrant, but to build a better life for itself and its neighbors. We seek a Persian Gulf where conflict is no longer the rule, where the strong are neither tempted nor able to intimidate the weak.

President George H. W. Bush, State of the Union Address, January 29, 1991

Twelve years after President George H.W. Bush gave this State of the Union speech, United States ground forces crossed the Iraqi border—this time to remove Saddam Hussein’s regime. The incumbent President, George W. Bush, declared that only Iraqi disarmament through regime change would reduce the potential of regional conflict.¹ Prior to the U.S.-led invasion, allied aircrews patrolled Iraqi no-fly zones in order to ensure the Hussein’s regime was contained, restricted in its development of weapons of mass destruction and unable to threaten Iraqi civilians.² However, by 2003, U.S. leaders believed that no-fly zones were no longer coercing Hussein to stop his development of weapons of mass destruction and direct action was required to change the regime.³ Thus began the effort to remove Saddam Hussein and seek a Persian Gulf where conflict is “no longer the rule.”⁴

¹ George W. Bush, “Address on start of Iraq war,” The Guardian, March 19, 2003, accessed January 24, 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/mar/20/iraq.georgebush>.

² Summary of goals from United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 688 (condemns Kurdish repression), 949 (further aggression toward Kuwait), and 1194 (compliance with IAEA inspections)

³ *Authorization for Use of Military Force against Iraq Resolution of 2002*, Public Law 107-243, U.S. Statutes at Large 116 (2002): 1498.

⁴ George H.W. Bush, “State of the Union Address,” *University of Virginia Miller Center Presidential Speech Archive (January 29, 1991)*. accessed January 23, 2012 <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3429>.

Over eight years later, 4,500 American military lives lost and \$1 trillion spent, the United States-led coalition withdrew its forces from Iraq.⁵ Naturally, many ask what the United States achieved from this expenditure of blood and treasure. The answer is currently ambiguous.⁶ Time will tell whether regime change in Iraq reduced regional conflict and secured stability. However, the more important question is not whether Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) succeeded, but rather, whether it was necessary to deviate from an apparently successful containment strategy.

For just short of twelve years, the international community executed coercive no-fly zones over Iraq with the intent to deter Hussein from committing belligerent acts and compel his retreat after violating international sanctions. During this time, Iraqi citizens suffered and remained oppressed under Hussein's dictatorship. However, if not deterred, Saddam Hussein was largely contained as a threat and the region was largely free of localized conflict.⁷

The evidence of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and his perceived weapons of mass destruction (WMD) largely drove the United States and its "coalition of the willing" to invade and remove his regime. However, the question remains—in light of scant evidence of possible WMDs—could the U.S. and allies have continued adequately coercing Hussein through no-fly zones rather than opting for major combat operations? Answers to this question will affect future U.S. strategy.

Recent legislation to restrain budget deficits adds additional constraints to future U.S. strategies. In its recently released strategy document, the Department of Defense departed from its long-standing plans to conduct two

⁵ Tim Arango, "U.S. Marks End to 9-Year War, Leaving and Uncertain Iraq," New York Times, December 15, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/16/world/middleeast/end-for-us-begins-period-of-uncertainty-for-iraqis.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed February 23, 2012.

⁶ Stephen M. Walt, "What Iraq can teach us about Iran," Stephen M. Walt Foreign Policy Blog, January 3, 2012, accessed January 4, 2012. http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/03/what_iraq_can_teach_us_about_iran and Arango, "U.S. Mark End to 9-Year War."

⁷ Walt, "What Iraq can teach us about Iran."

simultaneous wars. Instead, its focus is on one war and disruptive or delaying efforts elsewhere.⁸ Thus, the U.S. will likely be hesitant to execute major combat operations in response to crises not deemed serious threats to U.S. national security.

Such a strategy change, however, does not obviate the need for the U.S. military to prepare for a variety of crisis scenarios. The international community recently experienced such a scenario in Libya. As of this writing, a similar scenario may be on the horizon in Syria. The United States will thus need effective options for dealing with threats or crises that do not reach a threshold for boots on the ground. The need for options obliges the United States, as it did in Libya, to reevaluate the efficacy of no-fly zones in lieu of major combat operations. Such an evaluation is the intent of this work.

Prior to 2003, many considered no-fly zones largely ineffective and, at best, an inefficient instrument of coercion. However, the ambiguous end state and high cost in lives and treasure in Iraq lowers the confidence in major combat operations as the only or most effective coercive instrument. This study attempts to determine whether no-fly zones truly do offer an effective and efficient alternative means to coerce an adversary and, if so, to ascertain the critical factors leaders should consider in developing strategies based upon a no-fly zone option. In the end, this paper suggests coercive no-fly zone strategies are more prudent, in certain conditions, when compared to the cost in blood and treasure of major combat operations.

Chapter 1 of this study discusses the framework of theories, definitions and methodologies used in the analysis. It sets the foundation for the reader, developing both the fundamentals of the no-fly zone concept as well as the applicable theories of coercion. The following three chapters serve to analyze three no-fly zone case studies. These cases include no-fly zones over Iraq, Kosovo and Libya. Chapter 5 consists of an evaluation of the commonalities

⁸ U.S. Department of Defense. *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*. Department of Defense, January 2012
http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf, accessed January 23, 2012.

and trends across the three case studies in order to identify the critical aspects of coercive no-fly zones. This evaluation includes an assessment of the contribution of the coercive criteria to the success or failure of each scenario as well as the effects of the situational contexts of each case on the outcomes. Finally, Chapter 6 draws the important conclusions from the evaluation including possible implications and/or lessons learned from the study.



Chapter 1

Theory, Definitions and Methodology

To judge the efficacy of no-fly zones as a coercive instrument, this study builds its analytical framework from general theories of coercion. To that end, this chapter outlines the study's theoretical foundations and further endeavors to define the selected coercive air instrument commonly referred to as no-fly zones. Armed with an analytical framework and a coercive instrument, the study compares the coercive application of airpower in three cases. This section further charts this methodology, its evidentiary base and finally, the study's limitations.

Theory

Theories explain things. This study relies upon coercion theory to explain how and why an adversary changes his behavior. More specifically, the study seeks to resolve how and why airpower coerces. As such, this study draws from coercion theory to analyze airpower's coercive efficacy, with a specific focus on no-fly zones. This section builds the analytical framework for this endeavor.

Coercion is “manipulating an adversary’s policy choices and decision-making” to achieve a desired behavior.¹ On the international stage, states apply various instruments of power (economic, diplomatic, military, etc.) to manipulate an adversary’s decision calculus. This study focuses on coercion through military force. Threats or actual uses of military forces raise the cost of an unwanted behavior in order to induce the adversary to change his behavior. Using military force to manipulate the adversary is often the final option employed by states in their attempt to coerce an adversary.

¹ Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman. *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 30.

The goal of coercion is to influence behavior without executing the threat.² Coercion is then the acme of skill, subduing the enemy without fighting.³ Coercer's seek to influence the adversary to either not take a certain action he would otherwise desire (maintain the status quo) or stop a behavior (return to the status quo). For noted coercion theorist Thomas Schelling, coercion encompasses both aspects of manipulating adversary behavior. He defines maintaining the status quo, or "setting the stage" and waiting for the opponent to act, as *deterrence*.⁴ Threats or actions to influence a return to the status quo, or for Schelling, initiating an action designed to stop or compel a certain behavior, is *compellence*.⁵

Others, such as Robert Pape, define coercion differently. Pape's definition of *coercion*, "seek[ing] to force the opponent to *alter* its behavior," mirrors Schelling's *compellence*. Like Schelling, Pape defines *deterrence* as seeking to maintain the status quo.⁶ Due to the different nuances between these definitions, we must further elucidate a common baseline for the rest of this study.

Because they exist along a continuum, deterrent and compellent (Pape's coercion) actions often blur in practice, falling into a middle "gray area."⁷ If deterrence fails, compellence is frequently required and the conditions of the deterrence failure may affect the ability to compel.⁸ "Don't go further' involves both stopping an existing action and avoiding a future one"—simultaneously a

² Influencing behavior without executing the threat is the ultimate goal of coercion. Deterrence seeks to influence behavior, but not necessarily change behavior. It does so with threat only. Compellence seeks to influence behavior with a change to behavior and does so with a threat (only, at the "best" case end of the spectrum) and with force, if required.

³ "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill." Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford, New York: 2005), 115.

⁴ Thomas C. Schelling. *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn. London: Yale University Press, 2008), 71.

⁵ Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 72.

⁶ Robert A. Pape. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 4.

⁷ Karl Mueller. "The Essence of Coercive Air Power: A Primer for Military Strategists." *Air and Space Power Journal, Chronicles Online Journal*. Maxwell AFB, Alabama: Air University Press, 2001. Available at <http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/mueller.html>, 1.

⁸ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 7.

deterrent and compellent threat.⁹ Deterrence and compellence are hence co-dependent and under one coercive umbrella.¹⁰

Often in the following case studies, clear delineation between stopping an active action and deterring a future action is lacking. As such, this paper follows Schelling's model and uses *coercion* to represent both deterrence and compellence. Consequently, *coercion* represents both compellent and deterrent actions, often acting simultaneously. The aforementioned lack of consensus over terms belies a similar difficulty measuring the degree of coercion.

Ultimately, an adversary's decision to capitulate or ignore coercive threats rests on his own calculation of costs and benefits. Unfortunately, the coercer likely has little insight into the adversary's mental calculus and thus cannot completely determine what, if any, coercive actions influenced the adversary's behavior. Furthermore, because deterrence seeks to maintain the status quo, the only overt measure of deterrence is failure. Prior to failure, it is difficult to discern if deterrent threats are the forcing functions manipulating opponent behavior.

On the other hand, compellence is more readily observable. Compellent actions require the adversary to change his present course—either stop an action or reverse a completed action. Thus, the coercer may have direct feedback whether a specific compellent threat had the desired effect. Given this higher probability of overt feedback, concentrating on compellence should bear fruit. This study thus focuses on compellent threats to determine causality between coercive actions and adversary responses. Unfortunately, even if compellent cause and effect is observable, coercive success is not a binary metric.¹¹

Deeming coercion simply a success or a failure does not capture the complexity of coercive engagements and such logic may lead to erroneous conclusions. Regardless of the instrument, one cannot determine the coercive

⁹ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 8.

¹⁰ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 7.

¹¹ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 33.

efficacy of one instrument in isolation.¹² One such example of evaluating coercive success out of context is the debate over the coercive efficacy of the combined bomber offensive in World War II. The debate—largely stoked by airpower advocates—incorrectly focuses on the ability of airpower to coerce alone.¹³ But, such a debate risks reaching a false answer and missing marginal contributions or interaction among coercive instruments. Advocates should judge the efficacy of the combined bomber offensive on its achievements in context with other coercive instruments.

Because this study is concerned with the coercive efficacy of airpower, airpower's contribution to coercion is the dominant consideration. Yet the influence of other coercive instruments provides critical context and requires attention. Thus, the study highlights critical synergies between air, other coercive instruments and the general contextual situation. In the coercive game, however, the instruments are not the only variables clouding the determination of success or failure.

Defining success is often further confused by the presence of multiple goals for coercive engagements. Declaring success or failure based on a single explicit goal may dilute the efficacy of the coercive instruments. Analysts focused on explicit goals may miss the achievement of subtle, unstated or implicit coercive goals. Because states “seldom respond with a clear yes or no,” Byman and Waxman urge analysts to consider the degree by which a coercive instrument achieves the desired effect.¹⁴ In absolute terms, coercion may fail. However, a “failed” coercive strategy may still have significant effects on the adversary's calculus, justifying its utility. Clarifying the degree to which a coercive instrument manipulates the adversary's behavior is important.

Measuring coercion starts by defining observable criteria. These criteria should foster insight as to where coercive actions fall on a pass-fail spectrum. Scholars typically note three criteria to discern coercive success:

¹² Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 31.

¹³ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 31. Byman and Waxman highlight Richard Overly's counter to the argument that the CBO was not a success.

¹⁴ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 35.

*communication, capability and credibility.*¹⁵ These variables are measurable and thus facilitate grading the efficacy of a coercive instrument.

Communication, capability and credibility are the cornerstones of this study's analytical framework.

The coercer must clearly *communicate* the threat and the desired adversary behavior. Communication consists of both clear transmittal and reception of the threat and the desired behavior. Ensuring clear communication of a coercive threat is difficult in today's media-saturated environment. Implicit intentions may receive the same—or more—attention as explicit statements. Assessing the level at which the coercer is able to communicate his intent successfully is a key ingredient in determining successful coercion.

The coercer must also have the *capability* to carry out the communicated threat. A threat is empty if the coercer does not possess commensurate means. Yet means alone are not sufficient leading indicators of coercive success. Coercers must apply their capabilities within coercive strategies that match the desired goals. How well coercers use their available capabilities within coercive strategies is vital to success.

A coercer with the capability who has effectively communicated a threat may still fail if the coercer has minimal *credibility*. Credibility is a function of the adversary's perception of the coercer's will and commitment to follow through with a threat.¹⁶ This perception does not need to be correct in order to influence the adversary's behavior. Consequently, a credible threat is often difficult to achieve. Various factors (e.g. domestic issues, coalition relationships, or international disagreements) reduce the credibility of a coercer's threat.¹⁷ Moreover, the scale of the threat may affect the credibility. An adversary may view large-scale, expensive or otherwise politically risky

¹⁵ Mueller, "The Essence of Coercive Air Power," 4.

¹⁶ Mueller, "The Essence of Coercive Air Power," 4.

¹⁷ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 19.

threats as unrealistic and consequently less credible. An adversary who concludes his enemy lacks credibility will be less likely to capitulate.

A clearly communicated threat from a capable and credible coercer does not necessarily correlate to successful coercion. The three criteria establish a viable threat. Yet toward whom or what should the threat be targeted? Coercive mechanisms are the process by which threats alter the adversary's behavior.¹⁸ The coercive mechanisms help one understand how and why coercion works, linking coercive means to coercive ends.¹⁹ However, determining how or why an adversary will concede in the face of coercive force is far from an exact science. Because no blueprint of effective coercive mechanisms exists, this study draws on commonly used mechanisms to develop an analytical framework.

Byman and Waxman argue the most common mechanisms to manipulate regimes are through power base erosion, decapitation, weakening, popular unrest and military denial.²⁰ All of these mechanisms might lead to successful coercion alone or in combination. The mechanisms used by Byman and Waxman reflect Robert Pape's earlier work on airpower and coercion. However, Pape's singular focus on denial mechanisms underestimates the complementary effects of other coercive instruments.²¹ Consequently, Pape's narrow view unduly restricts the analysis of other coercive mechanisms. Byman and Waxman leave open the possibility of triggering capitulation by means other than denying the adversary his military option.²² The predominance of Pape's view of airpower may explain why many theorists focus on targeting (to achieve denial) versus these other mechanisms. Unfortunately,

¹⁸ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 48.

¹⁹ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 48.

²⁰ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 50-80.

²¹ Ellwood P. Hinman, *The Politics of Coercion: Toward a Theory of Coercive Airpower for Post-Cold War Conflict* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2002), 27. Scott Douglas argues that Pape's view is too narrow in Douglas, Frank. *Hitting Home: Coercive Theory, Air Power, and Authoritarian Regimes* (Dissertation, Columbia University, 2006). See Ch. 3, specifically p. 74.

²² Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 57. See note 1 Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, p. 50

airpower's coercive success is consequently linked to targeting strategies rather than how effectively airpower changes behavior.

Targeting strategies focus on the question of “what” targets one should threaten rather than “how and why” such targets contribute to coercion. Pape's denial strategy is primarily a targeting strategy. It identifies the specific targets needed to effect coercion (principally military forces). However, others such as Daniel Lake argue that targeting strategies serve “multiple coercive logics” and ultimately draw the attention away from the efficacy of airpower in affecting adversary behavior.²³ Lake highlights that “attack[ing] an opponent's military (a form of denial)” may also trigger other coercive mechanisms such as “stimulating civilian discontent by causing casualties (a form or punishment).”²⁴

Coercive mechanisms should capture a wide range of situations. The typology used by Lake is perhaps the most succinct distillation of coercive mechanisms. He combines Byman and Waxman's power base erosion and unrest into “political destabilization’ (threats to the ability of the target leaders to stay in power)” and includes “denial’ (threats to the ability of the target to achieve its goals), ‘direct pressure’ (threats to members of the target leadership and their possessions),” and “weakening’ (threats to the power and prosperity of the target state).”²⁵ These mechanisms describe “how and why” an adversary may concede but remain broad enough to allow for strategic context and multiple coercive logics. For this reason, this study employs Lake's typology in order to ensure the focus remains on airpower's influence on the opponent's behavior.

The debate about the coercive ability of airpower began in earnest following the 1991 Gulf War and largely continues today.²⁶ However, coercion theory has not changed. The formula for successful coercion still includes

²³ Daniel R. Lake. "The Limits of Coercive Airpower." *International Security* (Summer 2009): 83-112, 85.

²⁴ Lake, "The Limits of Coercive Airpower," 85.

²⁵ Lake, "The Limits of Coercive Airpower," 85.

²⁶ Pape's seminal work, *Bombing to Win* (published in 1996), countered air power advocates following Desert Storm.

clearly communicating the threat and the desired behavior, the capability to carry out a threat and the credibility to back up the threat. In addition, the coercer must understand the mechanism to manipulate the opponent's behavior. Over time, coercers applied various air instruments as coercive forces.²⁷ The chosen instrument of airpower for this study is the no-fly zone. However, the term *no-fly zone* lacks clarity. What is a no-fly zone? What does it do? Can you drive in a no-fly zone? Such questions require a bounding definition. The following discussion moves that direction, seeking clarity, establishing the bounds of the no-fly zone and its qualifications as a coercive instrument.

Definition: Air Exclusion Zones

Airpower's first use as a coercive instrument occurred not long after the aircraft took to the air. As early as 1919, the British used biplanes for "air policing" to control its Middle Eastern possessions.²⁸ The most recent manifestation of the "air policing" concept is the no-fly zone. The term *no-fly zone* leads many to conclude that such activities only restrict an adversary from flying within a certain region. While prohibiting an adversary's forces from flying is certainly a component of the modern no-fly zone, the concept is more extensive and its generous use in today's lexicon further clouds an agreeable definition.

A no-fly zone generally refers to the physical airspace above a nation in which flight can be restricted by airborne patrols. Yet controlling flight is just a subset of most modern no-fly zones. The modern version includes restricting ground activities, primarily with air strikes. This prohibition on ground activities leads to the creation of a "no-fly, no-drive zone."²⁹ Yet even the no-fly,

²⁷ The World War II Combined Bomber Offensive, Rolling Thunder and Linebacker are examples.

²⁸ Alexander Bernard. "Lesson from Iraq and Bosnia on the Theory and Practice of No-fly zones," *Journal of Strategic Studies* (September 2004), 455.

²⁹ Bernard, "Theory and Practice of No-fly Zones," 455.

no-drive zone nomenclature does not fully capture the coercive properties of the modern no-fly zone.

In an attempt to clarify the nature of the modern no-fly zone, Alexander Bernard offers three forms. The first, “air cover,” provides airborne cover, or protection, for peacekeeping forces on the ground. The primary purpose is to create a zone free of enemy forces that allows one’s forces on the ground freedom of action.³⁰ This concept is analogous to close air support or other such concepts.

When governments are unwilling to employ ground forces, no-fly zones become “air occupation” operations. Bernard posits that airpower as an “air occupier” can destroy or intimidate the targets sufficiently through precision weapons. An air occupation’s goal is to achieve effects similar to ground forces but at lower risk to one’s own forces and to reduce the impression of permanence.³¹ Occupation also allows a modicum of control over a region without physically breaching the nation’s physical land boundaries.

Bernard’s third conceptualization of the no-fly zone is as an “air deterrent.” The “air deterrent” no-fly zone is as the name implies, a presence representing a threat intended to preclude or deter the adversary from taking a particular action. Rather than deterrence via ground force presence, no-fly zones provide a scalable option that also reduces the risk to the side implementing the no-fly zone. The presence of aircraft over the belligerent allows the coercer the ability to shift from deterrence to prevention quickly and with less risk to its own forces.³²

Each of these conceptualizations captures elements of the no-fly zone but Bernard’s parsing implicitly assumes that a no-fly zone occurs only in a particular manifestation—cover, occupation or deterrent. In effect however, the no-fly zone could accomplish all three of these purposes simultaneously. Bernard does highlight deterrence as a coercive quality of the no-fly zone but

³⁰ Bernard, “Theory and Practice of No-fly Zones,” 456.

³¹ Bernard, “Theory and Practice of No-fly Zones,” 457.

³² Bernard, “Theory and Practice of No-fly Zones,” 458.

falls short in noting any compelling aspects. His “air occupation” is close but his treatment does not connect its use to any coercive goals. “Air presence” would be a more correct term. Bernard’s definition contributes but falls short in clearly defining the no-fly zone as a coercive instrument. Fortunately, a more complete concept, the Air Exclusion Zone (AEZ), will satisfy those seeking clarity.

Lt Gen David Deptula defines the AEZ as a “territorially-bounded area in which the target nation’s air and surface operations are controlled, even to the point of preclusion, against their will as an extended tool of diplomacy.”³³ Like Bernard, this definition recognizes airpower’s control over the adversary’s surface as well as airspace but goes further by acting to expropriate the nation’s sovereignty “with the goal of producing a broad set of political effects.”³⁴ Deptula’s broad definition does not limit the potential of AEZs. Instead, the AEZ becomes a diplomatic tool with wide ranging potential and possible effects on the adversary.

As a diplomatic tool, the AEZ encompasses several appealing qualities.³⁵ Like Bernard, Deptula recognizes that an AEZ provides both cover and occupation from the air but is also a “means to exert pressure” on an opponent.³⁶ Deptula cautions, though, that AEZs are limited operations designed to achieve limited ends. Yet an AEZ has the flexibility to contain, deter or control an opponent assuming the political context and objectives are commensurate with an AEZ’s capabilities.³⁷

The air exclusion zone’s properties make it an appealing description for this coercive air instrument. The deterrent and compelling capabilities dovetail with the criteria and mechanisms required for coercion. Because it is less

³³ Lt Gen David A. Deptula, “Air Exclusion Zones: An Instrument of Engagement for a New Era.” *Air power and joint forces : the proceedings of a conference held in Canberra by the Royal Australian Air Force*, 8-9 May 2000 (Fairbairn ACT: Aerospace Centre, Royal Australian Air Force, 2000), 123.

³⁴ Deptula, “Air Exclusion Zones,” 123.

³⁵ Several key qualities: enforce UN mandates, contain aggressors politically and/or militarily, support diplomacy without ground forces, and monitor. Deptula, “Air Exclusion Zones,” 127.

³⁶ Deptula, “Air Exclusion Zones,” 121.

³⁷ Deptula, “Air Exclusion Zones,” 124, 127.

intrusive, the AEZ is politically viable especially in contests where the coercer cannot “stomach” a large-scale effort.³⁸ This viability increases the coercive threat’s credibility. Furthermore, due to its scalable nature, the AEZ may trigger any of the coercive mechanisms discussed above.³⁹ As we will see in the case studies, the air exclusion zone is not the end-all-be-all coercive instrument. However, describing this air instrument as an air exclusion zone versus a no-fly zone fosters a robust and direct understanding of this coercive tool.

Even with its comprehensiveness, the use of the term air exclusion zone is not as commonly used as the term no-fly zone.⁴⁰ Joint Publication 3-0 does not directly mention the air exclusion zone as separate concept as it does the maritime exclusion zone.⁴¹ In fact, JP 3-0 only notes the no-fly zone as the manifestation of the aerial aspect of an exclusion zone. Does it matter? In short, yes.

Intended or not, use of “no-fly zones” focuses the attention too heavily on the flight denial aspect of the broader concept. Governments may choose to participate in a strict no-fly zone where they would not participate in an air exclusion zone. While denial of flight is one method to pressure an adversary, AEZs do much more. In effect, words matter. In order to encourage wider use of AEZ as the more appropriate verbiage, this paper will follow Deptula’s conceptualization of the air exclusion zone as the most correct embodiment of this particular coercive airpower instrument. We can now couple this strong description of this study’s coercive instrument to the theoretical framework established earlier. With the two main analytical components in hand, the next section describes how the analysis will assess the three case studies.

³⁸ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 89.

³⁹ Deptula, “Air Exclusion Zones,” 126. Byman and Waxman discuss the use of air strikes as a coercive instrument. Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 88.

⁴⁰ A simple internet search via Google produces 38,700 results for “air exclusion zone” whereas a “no-fly zone” search produces 5,380,000 results. Available at <http://www.google.com>, accessed 22 February 2012.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0*, V-13.

Methodology

Judging the efficacy of air exclusion zones requires assessing the coercive engagement's success and the associated cost *vis a vis* major combat operations. As discussed above, successful coercion possesses three criteria: a clearly communicated threat, a coercer with necessary capability to carry out the threat, and a credible expectation that the coercer has the will and commitment to carry through with threat. In addition, the coercer must employ a mechanism that will coerce the target. As also noted earlier, success is not a binary metric. Thus, one needs a systematic analysis to determine to what extent the coercer met the necessary coercion criteria, the mechanisms that led to coercion and the critical contextual factors that affected the outcomes.

Because the overall operational and strategic context is important, the first step in this systematic analysis is to set the initial conditions and context of each case. This includes understanding the key actors on each side, their values, any influential internal and external political considerations, and the needs for international legitimacy. Furthermore, the study frames coercive success by identifying the parties' expected goals or outcomes—explicit and implicit.

The next step in the analysis is to determine if the coercer succeeded in establishing the criteria for success. Asking to what degree did the coercer clearly transmit the threat and desired behavior, and, did the adversary receive and understand the threat will determine if *communication* occurred. The analysis of *capability* will largely focus on the air exclusion zone. Did the coercer employ the AEZ effectively is a key question. However, as air exclusion zones do not occur in isolation, the analysis will identify the contribution of other coercive instruments and the effect of the background security environment.

The analysis also seeks to establish if the coercer possessed the necessary *credibility*, especially in the mind of the adversary. This is perhaps

the most difficult task. Determining the efficacy of the AEZ will directly relate to the study's ability to understand the adversary's perception of his enemy. Truly getting inside the adversary's mind may be impossible. Instead, the study reviews available data to develop a profile of the adversary.

A review of the coercive mechanisms employed is critical to understanding the efficacy of AEZs. A misunderstanding of coercive mechanisms could lead to the misapplication of a credible threat. In order to validate coercive success or failure, the study assesses the degree to which the AEZs manipulated the opponent's behavior through the coercive mechanisms. This analysis is effectively two parts. First, it assesses the mechanisms coercers sought to trigger and the respective effects. Second, the study reviews the target to assess whether other mechanisms may have coerced either in conjunction or in lieu of the chosen mechanism.

Finally, a review of the actual outcomes of the coercive engagement closes the comparative loop between intended and actual outcomes. Notionally, coercion is successful when intended goals match actual goals. However, operational coercive successes may result in broader strategic failures or vice versa. Although not always intended, the actual outcomes shed light on the AEZ's contribution to coercion and may be equally important within the context of the engagement. Coercion may occur in unexpected ways for various reasons. Thus, the study assesses not just the degree to which the coercer achieved the intended outcome but also the effectiveness of the AEZ at coercion even if unexpected. In other words, "user error" does not invalidate the AEZ coercive value.

By its conclusion, the analysis will highlight 1) whether the coercer met the coercion criteria (communication, capability and credibility), 2) to what extent the AEZ contributed to the triggering of coercive mechanisms and 3) what significant contextual factors influenced success or failure. The study will apply these analytical components to the following cases.

Evidentiary Base

Airpower, specifically air exclusion zones, was the *primary* means of coercion in each case. Other coercive instruments existed in all of the cases, but the AEZ was the primary means for coercive *force*. The first case study analyzes the implementation of the AEZ in Iraq following Desert Storm. This analysis includes various coercive operations until 2003 but treats the case as one coercive campaign. This case is important due to its formative experience on future coercive AEZ efforts.

The second case is Operation Allied Force (OAF) over Kosovo from 1998 to 1999. This case draws the ire of those who suspect the coercive effectiveness of airpower. Debate continues as to the extent to which airpower contributed to Milosevic's capitulation, and thus this case is appealing to study. The Balkans also offers a contrasting contextual and physical environment to that of Iraq and the next case.

The final case study reviews the employment of the AEZ during Operations Odyssey Dawn and Unified Protector over Libya in 2011. This study considers these operations as continuous and broadly refers to them as the Libyan operations to coerce Gaddafi to stop killing innocent Libyans. As the first implementation of an AEZ following the U.S. experience in Iraq, the Libyan operation captures the return to the AEZ as a primary method of coercion in lieu of major combat operations.

Limitations

This study attempts to elucidate the efficacy of air exclusion zones. This scope limits a detailed the analysis of ancillary coercive instruments' contribution to success. The study accepts that no coercive instrument acts alone. Rather than a detailed analysis of other coercive tools, this study identifies where existing synergies enhance the efficacy of the air exclusion zone.

The study is also limited in its focus to states versus terrorist or other non-state actors. As such, the central actors in all of the chosen cases are states. However, the authoritarian nature of the regime leads one to focus primarily on the individual leader's perceptions and actions. The conclusions of this study may be translatable to non-state actors but the author makes no claim to that translation. The efficacy of AEZ on non-state actors could be a fruitful avenue for further research.

Furthermore, the study does not pass judgment on the moral, ethical or legal justifications for intervention. This does not preclude including the possible effects of differing opinions over intervention on coercer credibility or other coercive criteria. Finally, the study relies on open-source and unclassified data for its analysis.



Chapter 2

Iraq

From April 5, 1991 to March 19, 2003, the United States and its allies patrolled the skies over northern and southern Iraq in support of various United Nations Security Council Resolutions.¹ These operations differ from many cases. Unlike later cases, the Iraqi case affords an opportunity to study both coercion within specific engagements and the effects such coercive engagements had on a broader coercive campaign.

The primary goals from the end of the 1991 Gulf War until the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom were to deter Saddam Hussein from the massacre of ethnic Iraqi minorities, regional aggression, and the development of weapons of mass destruction.² The coalition against Hussein achieved varying degrees of coercion. In individual, or operational, coercive engagements the coalition largely succeeded in affecting Hussein's behavior. Success at the strategic level, though, was hazy. As this chapter discusses, the effectiveness of strategic coercion against Hussein degraded over time. However, the erosion of effectiveness was linked more to the coalition's coercive strategies rather than the efficacy of the coercive instruments—air exclusion zones.

Background

Coercion via airpower in Iraq was a tapestry of various coercive operations within what became a 12-year coercive campaign. The campaign's initial coercive thread was the international response to Saddam Hussein's subjugation of the ethnic Kurds. Designated Operation Northern Watch (ONW), the United States-led coalition created an air exclusion zone in

¹ Primary UN Security Council Resolutions imposed on Iraq: 661 (1990), 687 (1991), 688 (1991), 986 (1995), 1051 (1996), 1134 (1997), 1284 (1999) and 1511 (2003). Iraq Analysis Group, "Campaign against Sanctions in Iraq, UN Security Council resolutions relating to Iraq," <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/scriraq.html>, accessed January 23, 2012.

² Kenneth Waltzman. "Iraq: Policy Options," *CRS Report for Congress 98-393F*, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress (1998), 2.

northern Iraq to compel Hussein to stop actions against the Kurds and provide humanitarian relief.

The second air exclusion zone in Iraq, Operation Southern Watch (OSW), was also in response to ethnic repression, but this time of the southern Shi'a minorities. Again, the coalition's intent was to protect the local population and compel Hussein's withdrawal. Both ONW and OSW air exclusion zones remained active for the next 12 years. Together, these coercive operations formed the backbone of a strategic coercive campaign to deter the Hussein regime's aggression. In subsequent years, many of the coercive interactions were responses to weakening deterrence.

The first such engagement, Operation Vigilant Warrior (OVW), followed a new Iraqi buildup of 80,000 troops near the Kuwaiti border in 1994.³ To answer the challenge, President Clinton sent 36,000 troops and additional combat aircraft to Kuwait to augment the OSW AEZ. Another more overt engagement occurred two years later when Hussein executed a military offensive to take the Kurdish provisional capital of Irbil. Initially, Hussein was unresponsive to international diplomatic threats. Consequently, the coalition struck various Iraqi targets with cruise missiles in Operation Desert Strike (ODS) and Hussein withdrew.

The coalition responded to Hussein's challenges again in 1996 with additional air strikes in Iraq. Designated Operation Desert Fox, these strikes intended to break Iraqi intransigence with agreed upon U.N. weapons inspections.⁴ The results of Desert Fox from a coercion standpoint are largely inconclusive. Desert Fox was the first illustration of the degrading effectiveness of coercion over time in Iraq.

The final act in the coercive drama was the coercive engagement in the months prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom. A dwindling international coalition

³ Frank P. Harvey and Patrick James, "Deterrence and Compellence in Iraq, 1991-2003," in *Complex Deterrence Strategy in the Global Age*, ed. T.V. Paul et al (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 231.

⁴ United Nations Security Council (SC), Resolution 1051, March 27, 1996, <http://www.fas.org/news/un/iraq/sres/sres1051.htm>.

again attempted to compel Hussein to accept weapons inspections. By this point, however, the coercive value of the air exclusion zones was waning. Deconstructing the reasons for the diminished coercive value is important to judging the future efficacy of the air exclusion zone.

Actors

As previously stated, coercion is about manipulating an adversary's decision calculus and thus his or her behavior. Yet predicting another's behavior invariably requires some form of psychological profile. The following review of this case's actors falls short of a true psychological profile. The intent, however, is to highlight the important personal factors or perceptions that shaped the coercive engagements.

Iraq

Still entrenched following the 1991 Gulf War, Hussein held supreme control on power and decision making in Iraq. His overwhelming control allows the analyst to focus on Hussein as the single coercive target. Peeling back Hussein's reasoning, values and concerns fosters a deeper understanding of possible coercive pressure points. The following profile of Hussein relies on the wealth of data recently exploited from captured Iraqi documents.⁵

Although he held total control, Hussein was primarily concerned with regime internal security and control of power. Hussein believed he was the "center of the Iraqi state," and was vigilant and unwavering in eliminating threats.⁶ He created an environment of self-preservation amongst subordinates

⁵ The Iraqi Perspective Project has produced a significant review of the regime based on numerous captured classified and unclassified documents. Because many of these documents remain classified, this study relies on the review by Kevin Wood et al for its keen insight into the Iraqi Regime. Kevin M. Woods, Michael R. Pease, Mark E. Stout, Williamson Murray, and James G. Lacey. *Iraqi Perspectives Project : A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership* (Norfolk, VA: United States Joint Forces Command, Joint Center for Operational Analysis, 2006).

⁶ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 7.

that fostered endemic lying, a hobbled military, and virtually no ability to strategize.

The effect of the early Kurd and Shi'a uprisings on Hussein illustrates his overwhelming concern for regime security. Kevin Wood deems the "revolt of millions of Shi'a throughout southern Iraq, which was only put down after horrendous bloodletting, [as] the seminal event during Saddam's rule."⁷ Hussein remained concerned that strikes by the coalition would foment rebellion.⁸ Up until his final days, he intended to protect his regime.⁹ This extreme focus on regime security shaped Iraq foreign and domestic policies. As a result, the outsider can understand many of his actions through this lens.

A secondary, but still important, priority was the preparation to defend against regional threats, primarily Iran. The Iraq-Iran conflict reaches back many decades. However, the Shi'a rebellions further reinforced Iran as Hussein's foremost regional threat.¹⁰ Moreover, Woods et. al. argue that exercises to prepare for an Iranian invasion just months before Operation Iraqi Freedom demonstrate the extent to which Hussein placed the threat of regional adversaries over a U.S. led attack.¹¹

That said, Hussein still considered defending against another U.S. led attack a priority, albeit lower than regime security and regional threats.¹² Hussein recognized an American-led invasion as a threat, yet resources to protect against external threat largely went to his air defense forces.¹³ In the end, the psychological profile of Saddam Hussein as the head of the Iraqi regime is a mixture of traditional state concerns of security from regional and international threats laced with the abiding concern to control power.

Some argue that rationality is a critical trait for coercion to succeed. It is true that there is a higher probability of predicting rational behavior than

⁷ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 25, 52.

⁸ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 26.

⁹ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 114.

¹⁰ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 26.

¹¹ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 45.

¹² Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 25.

¹³ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 25.

irrational behavior and therefore a higher probability of designing a mechanism to influence a rational actor than an irrational actor. It is also true that Saddam Hussein's decisions often appear mystical and irrational.¹⁴ Yet many of his decisions were quite rational. He avoided bellicose actions that might provoke the United States following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, refusing to consider destroying oil infrastructure or strike preemptively.¹⁵ In addition, while brutal and often illogical, his dilution of power of those around him rationally insulated him from internal coups.

Saddam Hussein was indeed a monstrous and brutal dictator but at the same time rational and, possibly, even reasonably predictable. Framing his actions as ultimately stemming from the need to ensure his regime's survival from internal threats allows further clarity in assessing what pressure points might manipulate Hussein's behavior and decisions.

United States

The primary coercer in this case is the United States. Unlike Iraq, where one regime held the reins of power for the entire period, the United States experienced three different Presidential administrations: Presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. Despite the changing administrations, policy toward Iraq remained largely static from 1991 to 2003.

Containing the Iraqi threat was the primary American goal.¹⁶ As a form of deterrence, containment offered the United States a strategic goal with a lesser long-term commitment than regime change. Maintaining strategic containment would require various compellent operations when deterrence failed. The previously mentioned operations (ONW, OSW, etc.) represent coercive engagements designed to compel Iraqi return to the status quo of containment.

The policy of containment also included a heavy emphasis on preventing Iraq from developing WMD programs. As the probability of probing by a

¹⁴ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 12.

¹⁵ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 29.

¹⁶ Waltzman, "Iraq: Policy Options," 2.

weakened Iraqi military lessened, the primary threat to containment became the WMD threat. Beginning in 1998, the coercive engagements largely focused on compelling Iraq to forego WMD development. Commensurate with an increased focus on containing WMD development, the United States policy changed from implicit to explicit support for regime change.¹⁷ The targets struck during Operation Desert Strike (e.g. Republican Guard, Iraqi Intelligence service) demonstrate the Clinton Administration's efforts to weaken Hussein's support infrastructure.¹⁸

As a global hegemon, the United States must also consider second and third order effects of its actions globally and regionally. The U.S. showed such calculus in the deliberations over support to the Shi'a uprising immediately following the 1991 Gulf War. Not wanting an autonomous Shi'a, friendly to Iran and bordering Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the U.S. withheld action.¹⁹ Consequently, Hussein crushed the rebellion. Such considerations of second and third order effects inhibited a more comprehensive U.S. coercive campaign.

The United States hegemonic position complicates its activities toward specific regions or nations—it cannot afford to act everywhere. Accordingly, containment dominated early Iraqi policy. Containment shifted to regime change as fear of Hussein's WMD program grew. This shift represented a critical juncture in the coercive relationship with Iraq. Regime change raised the stakes in the coercive game and negatively influenced U.S. ability to coerce Hussein. As shown later, the efficacy of Iraqi air exclusion zones correlates with this policy shift.

International Actors

Over thirty countries participated in the 1991 Gulf War. In the years following, the international community continued to influence the situation in Iraq and the attempts to coerce Hussein. The United Nations was the primary

¹⁷ Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, H. R. 4655, 105th Cong. (1998).

¹⁸ Kenneth Waltzman, "Iraq: Policy Options," 2.

¹⁹ Dilip Hiro, *Neighbors Not Friends, Iran and Iraq after the Gulf War* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), 36.

avenue for much of this interaction but the efforts of certain nations had very specific effects on the coercive engagements in Iraq.

Over time, international sentiment toward Iraq became progressively sympathetic. Because of Hussein's control over his people's subsistence, economic sanctions had serious effects on the Iraqi people. As a result, the international community sought ways to lessen the direct impact of sanctions on the people.²⁰ Some nations, notably Russia and France, saw economic opportunity in Iraq. This shift was clear to those in Iraq: "France and Russia secured millions of dollars worth of trade and service contracts in Iraq, with the implied understanding that their political posture with regard to sanctions on Iraq would be pro-Iraqi."²¹ This sympathy became so widespread that by March 2003 only four nations of the 29 that participated in Desert Storm—U.S., U.K., Australia and Poland—participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom.²²

The individual motivations of nations who endeavored to loosen the coercive pressure on Iraq are beyond the scope of this study. However, the influences of the international community had notable effect on the coercive engagements in Iraq. In analyzing the efficacy of coercion in Iraq, one must factor in the considerable influence the international community's positions had on coercive success.

Coercive Criteria

As noted earlier, the adversary's perception of his opponent affects the credibility of a coercive threat. The adversary's view of the coercer's resolve

²⁰ United Nations Security Council (SC), Resolution 986, "Oil for Food Program," April 14, 1995, <http://www.uncc.ch/resolutio/res0986.pdf>.

²¹ Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz quoted in Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 28.

²² "Gulf War Coalition Forces by country," "Gulf War Veterans: Measuring Health" by Lyla M. Hernandez, Jane S. Durch, Dan G. Blazer II, and Isabel V. Hoverman, Editors; Committee on Measuring the Health of Gulf War Veterans, Institute of Medicine. Published by The National Academies Press 1999, http://www.NationMaster.com/graph/mil_gul_war_coa_for-military-gulf-war-coalition-forces, accessed May 6, 2012.

and commitment as well as his capability to enforce the threat all influence the target's decision-making calculus. Thus, determining the coercive efficacy of the air exclusion zones in Iraq requires understanding of Hussein's perceptions of Western credibility and capability as well as the West's success communicating its threats and desired behaviors. This assessment will also illuminate the case's predominant coercive criteria.

Credibility

Saddam's views and perception of the West shaped the degree to which he viewed Western threats as credible. The fact that he remained in power following Desert Storm influenced his view of Western resolve, and future interactions only reinforced that view. Ironically, much of the "intelligence" about the West came from the Iraqi Intelligence Service's mining of suspect sources and Hussein's restrictions on internet use.²³ Regardless of the source, several key perceptions dominated his thinking.

Hussein's first key perception was that the West lacked "the stomach for war."²⁴ In Hussein's view of war, success was the total annihilation of the enemy. Consequently, because the Gulf War coalition did not annihilate the Iraqi army and remove Hussein from power, he deemed the outcome a victory. Saddam "couldn't take the West seriously" because, in his perception, the United States ran away in Vietnam and Somalia and resorted to air strikes in the Balkans.²⁵ Subsequent coercive attempts (air exclusion zones, economic sanctions, etc.) did little to dissuade Hussein of his view that the West did not possess "stomach" for his version of war.²⁶ Before OIF, there is likely some truth in this perception.

Although the Gulf War coalition achieved its primary goals of expunging Iraq from Kuwait and seriously degrading the Iraq army, removing Hussein was

²³ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 11.

²⁴ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 29.

²⁵ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 29.

²⁶ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 16.

not a goal and therefore not accomplished.²⁷ Iraq was a necessary evil to balance Iran and thus annihilation of the Iraqi Army was not conducive to regional stability. Even if the U.S. had the “stomach” to invade, such actions were contrary to its regional interests.

In the U.S., domestic considerations also weigh heavily on foreign policy. Air exclusion zones and associated strikes allowed the United States to fight at a distance, lessening the possibility of casualties. While NATO had success with coercion in the Balkans by employing air exclusion zones, NATO member states could not agree on the use of ground forces for similar reasons. The aversion to ground forces and preferences for airpower matches Hussein’s perception of the west. Overcoming the effects of this perception would prove difficult.

A second critical perception was the eroding of international support for Iraqi sanctions. There is little doubt France, Russia and China gradually withdrew support to contain or punish Iraq. The broad alliance against Iraq began to fracture only three years from the end of the Gulf War. Harvey and James argue that these first “fissures” of support to coercing Iraq reflect fears of Iraqi counter escalation, using WMD, in response to coercive efforts.²⁸ However, fear alone was not the only motivator, as France and Russia both sought economic opportunities with Iraq.²⁹

Hussein’s perception of eroding international support was largely correct and reflected the problem of long-term coercion. Whether from fatigue, national interest or because Hussein actively fomented this fracturing through “bribery and political influence buying,” international credibility diminished through the latter half of the 1990s.³⁰ International will and commitment certainly was not equivalent to pre-Desert Storm levels. What Hussein did not

²⁷ National Security Directive No. 54, “Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf” (January 15, 1991) http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd_54.htm.

²⁸ Harvey and James, “Deterrence and Compellence in Iraq,” 233.

²⁹ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 28.

³⁰ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 28.

understand was the degree by which his potential possession of WMDs would harden the resolve of the United States and United Kingdom.

The international actions—or non-action—with regard to the Shi'a uprisings formed Hussein's final important perception of western credibility. Because uprisings were the dominant threat to his regime's security, Hussein viewed them with great concern. However, by leaving the Shi'a "in the lurch," the West reinforced regime security and thus Hussein's perceptions.³¹

However, the dichotomy between western support for the Kurds, who achieved a virtual autonomous state due to the ONW's air exclusion zone, and support to the Shi'a further clouded Hussein's perception of reality. Whatever the underlying reason for differing levels of international support, Hussein viewed western lack of support as further validation that he had certain freedom of action. Able to control what in his mind was the primary threat, Hussein viewed all other threats as tertiary, largely inconsequential, and thus less credible.

In the end, Hussein's reality directly influenced the efficacy of the air exclusion zones. He believed that as long as he contained internal security threats, his enemies would not dare remove him forcefully. As time marched on, he grew more confident. When international support waned, so too did western ability to coerce via airpower. By 2003, the credibility of coercive air power suffered from Hussein's view of reality.

Communication

Communicating Western threats and desires for Iraqi behavior succeeded and failed throughout this period. In instances where clear communication occurred, coercion had a higher degree of success. When communication was unclear or inconsistent, the west had little success coercing Hussein. This correlation of clear communication to successful coercion was evident in President Bush's responses in northern Iraq.

³¹ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 16.

President Bush was clear in his initial threats, leaving little doubt the U.S. would respond to Iraqi aggression in northern Iraq. Subsequent Administration statements, however, weakened the clear initial threats.³² As predicted by coercion theory, Hussein continued his aggression in the face of weak coercive messages. It was not until the U.S. communicated another explicit threat with clear expectations of behavior that Hussein stopped his aggression and accepted Kurdish autonomy.³³

Another such example where clear communication led to coercion occurred during Operation Vigilant Warrior. Despite initial international disagreements, UNSCR 949 eventually passed unanimously. UNSCR 949 was patently clear on what it expected of Iraq. It demanded Iraq remove forces back to original positions and take no action to enhance its military capability near Kuwait.³⁴ The demanded behavior was easy for the Iraqis to demonstrate and only required removal of the additional forces. The clearly communicated demands, backstopped by deploying forces, significantly contributed to successfully coercing Hussein to withdraw his troops.

These previous examples highlight communication successes at the operational, largely short-term level. However, at the strategic level, examples of successful clear communication are more elusive. The lack of clear communication channels largely led to the final downfall of Hussein. Faced with coercive threats to abandon his WMD program and succumb to full inspections, Hussein, in his mind, largely complied with western demands by 2002. Believing in his compliance, one can conclude that he acquiesced to coalition demands. Unfortunately, “years of deceit” by the Iraqis clouded U.S. conclusions as to Iraqi actions.³⁵

The muted communication between the U.S. and Iraq was evident in Iraqi actions following 9/11. The Iraqis, in order not to provoke the U.S., issued directives to cleanse anything that inspectors might perceive as WMD-

³² Harvey and James, “Deterrence and Compellence in Iraq,” 25.

³³ Harvey and James, “Deterrence and Compellence in Iraq,” 227.

³⁴ United Nations Security Council (SC), Resolution 949, October 15, 1994.

³⁵ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 93.

related. Instead of communicating compliance, these directives and subsequent communications communicated the opposite to Western intelligence agencies shaded by years of Iraqi duplicity. As Woods et al capture “Western intelligence analysts would have no way of knowing their information at this time indicated an attempt by the regime to ensure it was in compliance with UN resolutions.”³⁶

Moreover, activities to “remove all traces of previous WMD programs” became evidence that Iraq was hiding what was, by that point, a non-existent program.³⁷ These examples are not an indictment of U.S policy, as there is still ample evidence that Hussein likely intended a quick restart of his WMD program.³⁸ Yet they demonstrate the difficulty in ensuring clear transmission *and reception* of threats and behaviors. Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz captures such difficulties, “We didn’t have any opportunity to talk to a U.S. official during the Bush, Clinton, or the new Bush administration, so there was no opportunity to talk face-to-face and address matters of concern. They always rejected us...”³⁹

Numerous successes and failures in communication exist over the 12-year span of engagement in Iraq. However, it is notable that as perceptions cemented into reality over time, the ability of each side to communicate effectively diminished. It is also clear that communicating specific behaviors (e.g. removing troops from a border or dismantling surface to air missile sites) at the operational level is more fruitful than communicating desired state behavior at the strategic level. Moreover, communicating compellent behaviors such as stopping a specific activity afford more clarity than deterrent behaviors.

Capability

³⁶ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 94.

³⁷ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 93.

³⁸ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 95.

³⁹ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 89.

There is little doubt the United States and partners had the means to carry out most threats. By 1993, the Iraqis believed that the U.S. owned the “big space” through its northern and southern air exclusion zones.⁴⁰ The coalition was unwavering in its ability to execute air exclusion zones for over a decade. The air exclusion zone transformed over time from a pure no-fly zone to include strikes as it adjusted to the coercive needs. Interestingly, one of the more effective uses of the air exclusion was for psychological operations (PSYOP). The dropping of pamphlets caused “tremendous concern” for the Iraqi leadership.⁴¹

However, as one might expect, Iraq did alter its actions to counteract the effects of coercive instruments used against it. It changed its planning to account for the impacts of air exclusion zones by dispersing its forces. In addition, Hussein increased attempts to dilute coercive efforts in appealing to the international community, specifically Russia and France. In the end, the U.S. and its allies possessed adequate capability to threaten Iraq. Over time though, the West found it increasingly difficult to coerce Hussein. This case demonstrates the challenge of escalation dominance in long coercive campaigns.⁴²

Coercive Mechanisms

To varying degrees the United States, its allies and the international community employed various means, attempting to trigger all four coercive mechanisms. Yet not all means included force. Economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure, for example, attempted to weaken Iraq. All of the corollary coercive activities contributed to the background security environment. The purpose of this section is to identify to what extent AEZs effectively triggered the mechanisms of coercion. Thus, we are interested in what Byman and

⁴⁰ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 8.

⁴¹ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 95.

⁴² Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman. *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38.

Waxman call the “marginal change in the probability of behavior” induced by air exclusion zones.⁴³ The coalition attempted little weakening and no decapitation strategies via air exclusion zones. The two primary mechanisms where a marginal change did occur, however, were through the denial and political destabilization mechanisms.

Denial

The majority of coercive engagements were strategies to deny Iraq’s ability to achieve its goals. Airpower is uniquely suited for denial, especially when the adversary is seeking its goals with conventional military forces.⁴⁴ Consequently, air exclusions zones in Iraq were effective when Hussein’s strategy relied upon military forces to achieve his goal.

Two such examples, ONW in 1991 and ODS in 1996, endeavored to defeat the Iraqi army threats in the Kurdish north. Desert Strike targeted key Iraqi military targets in the south and represented a strong enough threat to coerce Hussein to remove his troops from Kurdish areas in the north. Likewise, ONW air cover offered humanitarian forces the ability to protect the Kurds, negating the Iraqi army potential for success.

Similarly, Operation Vigilant Warrior threatened Iraqi forces massing outside the border with Kuwait. The on-going air exclusion zone, underpinned by the deployment of additional troops to Kuwait, posed a direct threat to the Iraqi army and Hussein’s strategy. Hussein thus heeded the international community’s threat to remove his forces. These previous examples represent coercion at the operational level. Yet triggering the denial mechanism for strategic coercion was more difficult.

Aside from regime security, Hussein’s strategic success largely pivoted on his ability to withstand sanctions and intermediate attempts at coercion. This long-term strategy did not rely heavily on military means to achieve its goals. Instead, Hussein used diplomatic delay tactics and blocked inspector access to

⁴³ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 37.

⁴⁴ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 91.

suspect facilities. Where airpower was effective at countering military operations, it was largely impotent against Hussein's strategy to outlast his enemies. Air exclusion zones had little effect on the probability of changing Hussein's behavior at the strategic level.

This demonstrates the different levels of effectiveness of air exclusion zones. In this case, AEZs were most effective using a denial mechanism and were more effective at the operational than strategic level. The relative strategic ineffectiveness led many to move to ground forces as the final means of coercion in 2003. However, the next mechanism, political destabilization may have been a suitable alternative to exhaust before invasion.

Political Destabilization

Political destabilization possibly offered the greatest probability of coercion, yet the U.S. largely neglected this mechanism due to policy considerations. Political destabilization threatens the regime's hold on power through power base erosion or political unrest. Hussein secured his relationship with his Ba'ath power base through fear and absolute control. He feared, however, the possibility of unrest, especially unrest coming from northern and southern minorities. Fomenting this unrest may have increased the probability of affecting Hussein's behavior.

Operations Northern and Southern Watch, while primarily denial efforts, are examples of possible missed opportunities. Northern Watch's success at establishing a threat to Hussein security contrasted the coalition's failure to protect the Shi'a in the south. Without equivalent peacekeeping forces, Hussein persecuted thousands of Iraq Shi'a using long-range artillery and abated the internal security threat. Hussein's brutal attempts—and success—repressing these ethnic uprisings demonstrated the degree to which such unrest threatened him. In effect, both events triggered the political destabilization mechanism. Unfortunately, U.S. policy resulted in inaction in southern Iraq and undermined the credibility of the future threats of political destabilization.

This study noted earlier the Bush Administration's sensitivity to regional balance of power. Sunni dominated, and key regional ally, Saudi Arabia had similar power balance concerns. Dilip Hiro captures this sentiment, quoting a Saudi commentator: "Riyadh's worst scenario is a destabilized Iraq, a situation where Saddam Hussein can no longer hold the country together and is split into three: a Kurdish north, a Sunni middle, and a Shia south, allied to Iran, right next to Saudi Arabia's eastern region where its Shias are concentrated."⁴⁵ Therefore, while the AEZ posed a significant threat to coerce Hussein through political destabilization, foreign policy concerns limited the extent the coalition pushed to trigger political destabilization as a means of coercion.

By 1998 though, official U.S. policy had shifted to open preference for a new government in Iraq. Consequently, Operation Desert Fox in December 1998 attempted to trigger the political destabilization mechanism.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, the Russian and French rebukes following Desert Fox demonstrated the degree that international sentiment had shifted in favor of lessening actions against Iraq.⁴⁷ While it is clear Hussein's foremost value was regime security, the strategic context had shifted enough to diminish the credibility of this coercive mechanism.

Outcomes

The debate over the efficacy of Iraqi AEZs largely centers on their success or failure. Unfortunately, this debate neglects to view the problem as a comprehensive engagement. In addition, recently released captured Iraqi documents afford a clearer view of the adversary, Saddam Hussein. From an analysis of the outcomes, one gains a sharper understanding of the coercive contributions of the AEZ.

⁴⁵ Dilip Hiro, *Neighbors Not Friends*, 37.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Waltzman, "Iraq: Policy Options," 2.

⁴⁷ Harvey and James, "Deterrence and Compellence in Iraq," 242.

Operations Northern Watch met all three coercion criteria and represented an example of successful coercion at the operational level. Strong European solidarity and a commitment of U.S. ground forces underpinned the AEZ's credibility and demonstrated coalition capability. Furthermore, despite initial weakness, the international community clearly communicated its threat and the desired behavior to Hussein. Because Hussein based his strategy upon controlling the Kurdish region through force, Northern Watch triggered the denial mechanism and subsequently compelled Hussein to withdraw and agree to Kurdish autonomy. Northern Watch is unfortunately the first and last engagement with such clarity.

Some deem Operation Southern Watch an example of successful coercion at the operational level, but clarity of this success was elusive. Harvey and James cite Hussein's inability to use aircraft to suppress the Shi'a rebellion and the imposition of the AEZ over his sovereign spaces as "wins" for coercion.⁴⁸ However, we must review this apparent success within the engagement's context.

Beginning in the aftermath of Desert Storm, quashing the Shi'a rebellion was a primary focus for Hussein in southern Iraq and reflected the primacy of regime security. Although the OSW AEZ prohibited Hussein from using aircraft to suppress the rebellion, he largely achieved his goal by removing the Shi'a threat. Although prohibited from using aircraft, Hussein resorted to long-range artillery and draining a southern marsh, killing or displacing tens of thousands of Shi'a.⁴⁹

While OSW certainly compelled Hussein to accept the AEZ, the AEZ did not compel Hussein to stop mass atrocities. Instead, he continued until he

⁴⁸ Harvey and James, "Deterrence and Compellence in Iraq," 225-227.

⁴⁹ Michael Wood, "Saddam drains the life of the Marsh Arabs: The Arabs of southern Iraq cannot endure their villages being bombed and their land being poisoned, and are seeking refuge in Iran." *The Independent*, August 29, 1993, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/saddam-drains-the-life-of-the-marsh-arabs-the-arabs-of-southern-iraq-cannot-endure-their-villages-being-bombed-and-their-land-being-poisoned-and-are-seeking-refuge-in-iran-michael-wood-reports-from-huwaiza-marsh-on-the-death-of-a-5000yearold-culture-1463823.html>, accessed February 29, 2012.

reached his goal and only capitulated to international demands after securing his regime. This demonstrates the mismatch between coalition goals (accept the AEZ) and Hussein's operational goal (internal security). The disparity between the coalition's desired behavior and Hussein's desired end state illustrates the difficulty assessing coercive success. The coalition believed it was successful. So did Saddam.

Subsequent coercive operations would still succeed. Operations Vigilant Warrior and Desert Strike both manipulated Hussein's behavior. While Hussein acquiesced in those operations, international support for coercive actions in Iraq steadily weakened. The strategic environment, as a result, progressively changed and paralleled a decline in U.S. credibility.⁵⁰ Thus, on the eve of invasion and based largely on his perceptions noted earlier, Hussein did not see U.S. threats as credible. It would appear then that despite early success, AEZs fail over time as various influences erode the credibility of coercive instruments. However, this conclusion misses the underlying failure of U.S. coercive strategy: emphasis on the incorrect coercive mechanism.

Each operation of the coercive campaign in Iraq largely sought to trigger denial mechanisms to coerce Hussein. As noted above, ONW, OSW, OVW and ODS all threatened Hussein's strategy with coercive threats or actions against fielded forces. Consequently, each of these operations coerced Hussein. However, coercion by denial is only effective if the coercive instrument can affect the adversary's strategy. Hussein's strategy shift to delay and obfuscation—sans military forces—muted the effectiveness of the AEZs. A commensurate shift in the coalition's strategy was not only warranted, but also necessary to continue manipulating Hussein's behavior.

Shifting to a strategy that triggered political destabilization was likely the coalition's highest probability of coercing Hussein and its best option. Outlined in depth earlier, the security of his regime security was always forefront for Hussein. He viewed his ability to suppress the Shi'a as evidence that the

⁵⁰ Harvey and James, "Deterrence and Compellence in Iraq," 229.

coalition posed no serious strategic threat. In fact, when the U.S. strategy did increase emphasis on political destabilization targets, as it did during Desert Fox, Hussein became concerned over the possibility of new rebellions.⁵¹ From one of Hussein's close advisors, Ali Hassan al-Majid Takriti ("Chemical Ali"), "The key Iraqi weakness lay in the fact that the longer we were at war, the more difficult it would be to maintain control of the civilian population."⁵²

Unfortunately, by Desert Fox in 1998, weakened coalition credibility and communication breakdowns offset the ability to coerce Hussein through political destabilization. The U.S. and its allies failed to understand the nature of the Iraqi regime. In not understanding the adversary's values sufficiently, the coalition incompletely applied AEZs against the mechanisms with the highest chance of success—political destabilization. The final "failure" of the AEZ is not so much an indictment of the instrument but an indictment of the coercer's strategy and contextual understanding.

Reviewing the outcomes, it becomes clear that air exclusion zones can increase the probability of manipulating behavior and thus are effective coercive instruments. As theory suggests, the probability of coercion increased when the coalition was credible, possessed an adequate capability and communicated clearly. However, the probability of success diminished when the coalition applied AEZs against the incorrect coercive mechanism. In the end, how, or against what mechanism, AEZs are applied is as important to success as ensuring coercer meets the coercive criteria.

⁵¹ Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 26.

⁵² Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Project*, 26.

Chapter 3

Kosovo

The following case study analyzes the coercive engagement in the Balkans from 1998 to 1999 between NATO and Serbia. NATO called the military action, conducted from March to June 1999, Operation Allied Force (OAF). The broader context of this operation, however, began as early as 1989. These early international efforts to coerce Serbian leaders were convoluted engagements involving a variety of actors and coercive targets. NATO's execution of OAF, on the other hand, focused on a single coercive target, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. Focusing on this high-intensity portion of the decade-long coercive struggle (OAF) is valuable in assessing the efficacy of air exclusion zones.

By narrowing the focus to OAF, this study reduces the complexity of the analysis and focuses its review on the critical coercive conditions and mechanisms that influenced Serbian submission. Because of NATO's reliance on air actions, this case warrants inclusion to help resolve the polarized debate on airpower's role in coercion. The debate largely focuses on the influence of ground forces on coercion. In fact, the evidence suggests that while the threat of ground forces certainly contributed to the background coercive environment, another mechanism, political destabilization, drove Milosevic's behavior change. This chapter concludes that air exclusion zones were indeed a significant contributor to coercion.

Background

Beginning in March 1999 and spanning just 78 days, Operation Allied Force was a relatively discreet coercive engagement in the Balkans. This operation was the final move in the NATO-Serbia chess match in Kosovo. In its first military action since its organization, NATO executed over 38,000 combat sorties to: "demonstrate the seriousness of NATO's opposition to Belgrade's

aggression in the Balkans...deter Milosevic from continuing and escalating his attacks on helpless civilians and create conditions to reverse his ethnic cleansing and...damage Serbia's capacity to wage war against Kosovo in the future or spread the war to neighbors by diminishing or degrading its ability to wage military operations."¹ This coercive engagement was the culmination of a decade of interaction between Serbia and NATO.

The people of the Balkans are no strangers to ethnic friction, but the region was largely stable under Tito's Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s rekindled the fire of ethnic conflict. By 1989, Serbia was harshly enforcing its domain over Kosovo despite Albanian Kosovars' desire for autonomy. As human rights violations increased, President Bush condemned the violations in his 1992 "Christmas Letter." Despite Bush's warnings, Serbia continued unabated in its oppression of ethnic Albanian through the mid-1990s.

Meanwhile, the United Nations (UN) focused its attention on Bosnia and Herzegovina and the burgeoning humanitarian crisis. Bosnian Serbs, unhappy with the formulation of the new Bosnia and supported by Milosevic, declared their independence. Following a series of brutal atrocities, most notably the summer 1995 massacre at Srebrenica, the international community intervened. The response, a UN and NATO air exclusion zone over the region, coerced the Bosnian Serbs to negotiate a peace settlement. The result of these negotiations was the December 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. However, peace would not last in the Balkans.

Driven by lasting oppression and a desire for autonomy, Kosovars began a concerted battle for independence in 1996. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) led the fight, but was branded a terrorist group by the international community due to its tactics. This view changed by 1998 as the international community recognized the brutal Serbian oppression and reported ethnic

¹ U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, "Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After Action Report," January 31, 2000, xvii.

cleansing of Kosovar Albanians. After more threats and failed negotiations, NATO resorted to, what amounted to, an AEZ to remedy the crisis.

Thus, on the eve of Allied Force, a decade of engagement shaped NATO's ability to coerce Milosevic. Unconvinced of NATO's will and ability, only force could change Milosevic's behavior. Based on this background, this study intends to understand the factors that changed Milosevic's decision calculus resulting in his June 1999 capitulation.

Actors

The number of actors and their varied interests in this case complicates analysis. To focus the analysis, this study concentrates on the principal participants who had direct bearing on the outcome of the coercive engagement. This section reviews four actors: Serbia, U.S., NATO and Russia, to tease out the contextual elements that influenced NATO's ability to coerce Serbia.²

Serbia

Slobodan Milosevic as the leader of Serbia was the primary adversary in this coercive relationship. Milosevic rode his stance against Kosovo independence to power in 1989. Kosovo was thus an important symbol of his authority and their quest for independence threatened his control.

Milosevic held singular control of power, but, unlike Hussein, elections provided an air of legitimacy. Milosevic, however, was not above manipulating elections to maintain power.³ Under the façade of legitimate elections, Milosevic derived his true power from three domestic groups: "Serbia's economic elite, socially and politically conservative Serbs, and Serbian

² This study treats the United States as separate from NATO due to its hegemonic position in world affairs.

³ Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 478.

nationalists.”⁴ Of these, elite support was critical. Elite support was contingent on economic benefits rather than any ideological connection with Milosevic and formed the nucleus of his power.⁵ Without the support of Serbia’s elite, Milosevic’s “soft authoritarian” regime could not remain in power.⁶

Milosevic’s regime security was then the primary driver in his policy and strategy formulations. Throughout his tenure, he focused on minimizing threats to his regime. Not noted for his stewardship of state interests, Milosevic provisioned paramilitary or police forces to maintain control instead of satisfying other economic needs.⁷ He went as far as deliberately causing economic problems in Serbia to keep the population under control.⁸ Over time, he translated his power into full control of all aspects of Serbian government, media and information.⁹

Milosevic’s actions in Kosovo reflected Kosovo’s role in Milosevic’s maintenance of power. He endeavored to maintain sovereign control of Kosovo, eliminate the threat of the KLA and change the ethnic balance in Kosovo to favor Serbs.¹⁰ More broadly, Milosevic envisioned a “Greater Serbia” spanning the Balkans.¹¹ After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Kosovo lingered as a potential breakaway region and Milosevic feared other irredentist regions might be similarly encouraged—a blow to Serbian prestige.¹² So, retaining Kosovo as a part of Serbia served Serbian nationalistic goals and Milosevic’s personal interests.

⁴ Daniel R. Lake, "The Limits of Coercive Airpower." *International Security*, (Summer 2009: 83-112). 102.

⁵ Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 102.

⁶ Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 100, Frank Douglas, *Hitting Home: Coercive Theory, Air Power, and Authoritarian Regimes* (Dissertation, Columbia University, 2006), 148.

⁷ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 154.

⁸ Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 98.

⁹ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 381.

¹⁰ Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 88.

¹¹ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 154.

¹² Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 105.

Called “wily and stubborn,” Milosevic had a knack for manipulating events to serve his own ends.¹³ His concerns over regime security were so deep that he scuttled the 1998 Rambouillet peace negotiations. The Rambouillet agreement granted Kosovar autonomy and possible independence for Kosovo. This perceived breach of Serbian sovereignty was unacceptable and thus untenable to the Serbian public.¹⁴ Rambouillet became a rallying cry for Serbian nationalism and bolstered the Milosevic regime.

Milosevic also considered Russian support a foil to potential western intervention. With Russian support, Milosevic believed he could manipulate and outlast NATO. Supported by a stable power base, Milosevic appeared able to withstand coercion. Only diminishing external support and/or significant threats to his regime internal security could manipulate his behavior.

United States

Although part of NATO, a review of the United States apart from NATO is necessary due to its position in world affairs and its role as the predominant OAF force provider. The Balkan crises occurred primarily under the Clinton Administration. However, the Bush Administration was the first to set U.S. policy for the Balkans. President Bush’s 1992 “Christmas Letter” articulated U.S. policy on Kosovo: “in the event of [a] conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action, the United States will be prepared to employ *military force* [emphasis added] against the Serbs in Kosovo and Serbia proper.”¹⁵

On the eve of OAF, non-military sanctions and diplomatic efforts failed to coerce Milosevic to withdraw and stop the oppression in Kosovo. However, Clinton’s general distaste for military action and a disinclined Pentagon limited

¹³ Andrew L. Stigler, “A Clear Victory for Air Power: NATO’s Empty Threat to Invade Kosovo,” *International Security*, (Winter 2002/2003): 124-157, 150. Stephen T. Hosmer, *The Conflict Over Kosovo: Why Milosevic Decided to Settle When He Did* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1351, 11.

¹⁴ Hosmer, *Conflict Over Kosovo*, 16.

¹⁵ President Bush quoted in Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 367.

coercive options.¹⁶ The previous debacle in Somalia and the standoff strikes against Saddam Hussein illustrated Clinton's general aim to minimize threats to U.S. forces. Consequently, the Administration was averse to using U.S. ground forces at all.¹⁷ Because of their potential to insulate U.S. forces from threat, air exclusion zones became the preferred tool of coercive force.

The Clinton Administration developed three goals for Allied Force. The United States with its NATO allies would: "demonstrate the seriousness of NATO's opposition to Belgrade's aggression in the Balkans...deter Milosevic from continuing and escalating his attacks on helpless civilians and create conditions to reverse his ethnic cleansing...and...damage Serbia's capacity to wage war against Kosovo in the future or spread the war to neighbors by diminishing or degrading its ability to wage military operations."¹⁸ Note that these broad objectives did not stipulate Milosevic's removal from power nor did they explicitly demand a free Kosovar state. This articulation of objectives framed OAF and reflected the political reluctance to overcommit in the Balkans.

The United States was generally unenthusiastic about acting in the Balkans. Parallel engagements in Iraq received a higher national security priority and attention. The Clinton administration, forced to act in Bosnia, distanced itself from the region following the 1995 peace agreement. The U.S. was thus a reluctant coercer with limited goals. This reluctance did little to bolster a perception of strong resolve and commitment to act in Kosovo.

NATO

Allied Force was at its core a NATO effort with the associated challenges of coalition operations. Although all had a common interest in resolving the humanitarian crisis, individual national policies drove disagreements. Consensus thus dominated NATO's strategy formulation. In essence, NATO

¹⁶ Wallace J. Thies, "Compellence Failure or Coercive Success? The Case of NATO and Yugoslavia," *Comparative Strategy*, 22:243-267, (2003), 252. Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 137.

¹⁷ Thies, "Compellence Failure or Coercive Success," 247.

¹⁸ U.S. DOD, "Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After Action Report," xvii.

agreed that “enhanced autonomy within Serbia” was the core goal to achieve stabilization.¹⁹ Like the U.S., however, NATO members were reluctant to contribute ground forces to achieve this goal.

NATO members had various reasons to avoid ground forces. Germany, although committed to humanitarian efforts, was “deeply reluctant to openly discuss a NATO ground operation.”²⁰ Others such as Greece and newly admitted Hungary were disinclined based on ethnic, cultural or religious connections with Serbia.²¹ Early unwillingness of nations to use any force demonstrates the potential difficulty of garnering support for ground troops.²² In the end, NATO reflected U.S. reluctance and the air exclusion zone was the only acceptable coercive instrument.

NATO also saw Kosovo as a chance to validate its existence following the end of the Cold War. The United Nations Protection Forces’ (UNPROFOR) performance in Bosnia damaged U.N. credibility in resolving such crises. NATO also saw its credibility on the line as well. Kosovo provided Europe and NATO the opportunity to take a larger leadership role in the post-Cold War world. Thus, despite concerns over intervention, NATO felt compelled to act decisively in Kosovo.

The end of the Cold War also offered European nations the opportunity to enhance their standing on the world stage and check U.S. influence. As Scott Douglas highlights for France, “Within the alliance, France also had [a] unique position and an interest in making sure that the US adhered to NATO protocol as closely as possible. France contributed even more than the UK to NATO’s aircraft inventory for the Kosovo operation, and like the UK, had a special “veto” power in vetting proposed targets. As post-war accounts uniformly suggest, the power was assiduously employed and was most visible when France’s strategic emphasis differed from either the US or the UK.”²³

¹⁹ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 366, n. 2.

²⁰ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 370.

²¹ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 370.

²² Henriksen, *NATO’s Gamble*, 86, 130.

²³ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 369.

Leadership by committee would become a hallmark of Allied Force. As discussed below, the effects of consensus leadership would influence the efficacy of coercion in Allied Force.

The dichotomy of national policies defied the development of a solid political strategy.²⁴ This lack of strategy coupled with the need for political consensus and an assumption that Milosevic would capitulate quickly frustrated the military planning.²⁵ Thus, when NATO went to war over Kosovo in March 1999, the political objectives were vague and simply “comprised a moral aspect...a strategic aspect...and a pragmatic aspect.”²⁶

The moral, strategic and pragmatic aspects of NATO’s political leanings eventually coalesced to echo the Clinton Administration’s objectives. One month after bombing began, NATO had several practical goals: “to compel a cessation to the Milosevic regime’s policy of ethnic terror; to force a withdrawal of Serbian troops to ensure the return of Albanian refugees; to compel Belgrade to accept a political settlement that promised a high degree of autonomy to Kosovo; and to demonstrate the viability of NATO to the post-Cold War world.”²⁷ These goals drove strategy for the remaining effort.

By 1999, airpower was the only broadly acceptable coercive instrument of force available to meet NATO’s objectives and still achieve consensus. However, political restraints frustrated the development of sound coercive strategy and risked diluting the coercive effectiveness of the air exclusion zone.

Russia

Russia played a significant role during Kosovo as a diplomatic sponsor for Serbia on the international stage. The dissolution of Communism did not diminish the role of Russia in the Balkans. By 1995, Russia was a member of

²⁴ Henriksen, *NATO’s Gamble*, 8.

²⁵ Henriksen, *NATO’s Gamble*, 9.

²⁶ Henriksen, *NATO’s Gamble*, 8.

²⁷ Daniel L. Byman and Matthew C. Waxman, “Kosovo and the Great Air power Debate,” *International Security*, (Spring 2004:5-38), 16.

the Bosnia Contact Group, but was continually at odds with the U.S.²⁸ Disputes ultimately dissolved the Contact Group's utility, led to NATO's assumption of leadership and elevated diplomacy as Russia's principal role.

Russia's participation also obviated the need for NATO to seek legitimacy through the U.N. When the U.K., Germany and France desired a U.N. mandate, Russia indicated it would veto any such efforts. As the Russian foreign minister told his European colleagues, "we'll veto [a UN resolution]" but would "just make a lot of noise" over NATO air operations.²⁹ Dag Henriksen, quoting Tim Judah, demonstrates the importance of this statement, "What had just taken place then was a watershed. [Russia] had, in effect told NATO that it would do nothing [but make public noise] if it [NATO] were to bomb."³⁰ From this point forward, NATO would lead efforts with the tacit understanding that Russia would remain only diplomatically involved. Yet Russian reluctance to withdraw support from its "Slav brethren" would continue to frustrate NATO efforts on agreement.³¹

Milosevic's resilience paralleled Russian support. Scott Douglas argues that Russia's role was that of "an umpire" whose goal was to avoid NATO invasion of Serbia.³² Stephen Hosmer agrees with this assessment, noting, "[Russian President Boris] Yeltsin was unwilling to risk a military confrontation with NATO to ensure Milosevic's continued tenure as leader of the FRY or to ensure Serb control of Kosovo."³³ Milosevic's diplomatic foil remained as long as Russian interests aligned with supporting Serbia. Yet Milosevic's continued defiance of threats to stop the oppression in Kosovo conflicted with Russian desires to open its relationship with the West. This explains later Russian acceptance and advocacy for the terms of the Rambouillet Peace agreement. In

²⁸ The Contact Group was the group of nations attempting to resolve ethnic conflict in the Balkans.

²⁹ Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 152.

³⁰ Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, 2nd ed., (New Haven, Conn: Yale Nota Bene, 2002), quoted in Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 152.

³¹ Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 130.

³² Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 545.

³³ Hosmer, *Conflict Over Kosovo*, 43.

the end, Russian interests trumped continued Serbian support. When Russian support dissolved, Milosevic was isolated and weakened.

Coercive Criteria

By 1998, Serbia and the West had been engaged in a decade-long coercive drama. Each act within this drama cemented Serbian perceptions of NATO credibility and capability. To establish viable threats, NATO would need to overcome these perceptions and break poor patterns of communication to manipulate Milosevic's behavior. This section discusses the predominant factors that affected NATO credibility, underlines the communication challenges, and highlights the limits of NATO capability.

Credibility

Milosevic's disregard for NATO threats stemmed from three central perceptions. The first was the continuing lack of Western attention or interest in the Balkans. Second, Milosevic believed that NATO's need to act through consensus would inhibit sufficient action. Third, Milosevic remained confident in his regime's ability to withstand prolonged pressure. Finally, the credibility of NATO ground threats was also an important element of coercion. The West did little to dispel these perceptions.

As early as 1990, the West recognized the Milosevic regime was violating Kosovar Albanian rights. The West, and particularly the U.S., however, was preoccupied with the Gulf War and events associated with the fall of Communism. After informal warnings, President Bush's "Christmas Letter" was the first overt coercive threat to stop repression. The letter's threat of military force would set a high bar for future responses should ethnic cleansing occur in Kosovo.³⁴ Subsequent inaction diluted this strong initial threat of military force, making it appear quite hollow.

³⁴ Thies, "Compellence Failure or Coercive Success," 246.

The inconsistent actions of the United States around the world at this time further diminished its credibility. The U.S. used coercive military force in Panama and Kuwait but viewed internal conflicts such as the ethnic uprisings in Iraq as internal matters, only acting when the scale of suffering became an international crisis. Even when it did react to humanitarian crises elsewhere, the United States largely ignored Serbian actions in Bosnia. The message Milosevic received was that the international community tacitly accepted his actions.³⁵ Tacit acceptance continued into the Clinton Administration.

Up to the Bosnian conflict, compellent threats were largely hollow. Even after the shelling around Gorazde and the taking of UN hostages further sullied NATO credibility, the West launched no threatened air strikes.³⁶ Wallace Thies goes as far as to argue that U.S. reluctance to participate in the Bosnia peacekeeping forces tempered its success in brokering the Dayton peace.³⁷ A pattern of empty threats and muted responses reinforced perceptions that NATO and the West would tolerate certain levels of repression. The West did little to counter this perception following Bosnia. Like Hussein, Milosevic viewed Operation Desert Fox as weak compellent responses. Although a demonstration of resolve, “the belief that NATO was not credible lingered.”³⁸

The need for consensus was another fissure in NATO credibility. Political battles over objectives, targeting and the viability of a ground threat contributed to this diminished credibility. Concern over “escalatory action” further limited NATO options.³⁹ Milosevic believed he could “weather the storm” of limited NATO actions until Western resolve broke. As Byman and Waxman capture, “Milosevic appears to have shared previous estimations [of Ho Chi Minh and Mohammed Farah Aideed] that American political will would erode as U.S. casualties mounted.”⁴⁰

³⁵ Thies, “Compellence Failure or Coercive Success,” 246.

³⁶ Thies, “Compellence Failure or Coercive Success,” 247.

³⁷ Thies, “Compellence Failure or Coercive Success,” 247.

³⁸ Lake, “Limits of Coercive Airpower,” 105.

³⁹ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 417.

⁴⁰ Byman and Waxman, “Kosovo,” 32.

Before Allied Force, Milosevic needed scant encouragement to believe Serbia could withstand NATO pressure. Throughout the spring of 1998, Serbia defied NATO threats with military action in Kosovo.⁴¹ NATO bluffs such as Operation Determined Falcon did little to dissuade this view.⁴² Milosevic also witnessed the level of force used against Serb forces in Bosnia and assessed that future NATO actions would be similar. He thus prepared for the eventuality of air strikes and developed counter-measures to protect his regime.⁴³ By the start of Allied Force, little evidence suggests that Milosevic believed we could not withstand NATO's coercive attempts.

The on-going debate over the threat of ground forces reflects the final facet of credibility in this case. Some, such as Benjamin Lambeth and Robert Pape, argue that ground forces were the key threat.⁴⁴ Others, such as Andrew Stigler and Scott Douglas discount the threat of invasion.⁴⁵ A review of the value of a ground invasion is later in this chapter; however, the continued debate indicates that at best the ground threat was only marginally credible. How can one expect Milosevic to believe a threat whose viability analysts still question today, even with access to historical evidence?

The early actions by NATO established a context for Allied Force that resulted in doubt about NATO's resolve. The patterns of behavior established over a decade formed a lasting impression on Milosevic. By 1999, Milosevic was sure in his ability to retain power despite NATO threats and believed he was acting "within a zone of international tolerance."⁴⁶ When NATO eventually applied coercive force, Milosevic continued to believe he could withstand

⁴¹ Thies, "Compellence Failure or Coercive Success," 252.

⁴² Stigler, "A Clear Victory for Air Power," 150.

⁴³ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 416.

⁴⁴ Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Air Power*, Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, (2000), 231, and Robert A. Pape, "The True Worth of Air Power," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2004, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/print/59714>.

⁴⁵ Stigler, "A Clear Victory for Air Power" and Douglas, *Hitting Home*.

⁴⁶ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 425-6.

punishment longer than NATO's resolve would remain intact.⁴⁷ Thus, coercing Milosevic would be more difficult than hoped.

Communication

NATO's patterns of communication had marked influence on Milosevic's behavior. Message inconsistencies weakened NATO attempts at coercion. President Bush's Christmas warning set the tone for future communication, clearly threatening military force if Serbia did not restrain itself in Kosovo.⁴⁸ This warning fit the hallmarks of communication with a clear threat and desired behavior. Yet when subsequently challenged without response, these threats became empty.

Inconsistent communication did little to strengthen the credibility of NATO or the United States in the following years. In an effort to avoid another Bosnia, Milosevic received public praise for cooperation rather than threats of further punishment. Coupled with the designation of the KLA as terrorists, Milosevic viewed the change in tone if not as a "green light" than as a pretext for violence against the KLA.⁴⁹

As NATO neared the precipice of Allied Force, mixed messages confounded any clear communication. Efforts to maximize NATO flexibility, or "leave all of the options on the table," created enough uncertainty to degrade the threat of force.⁵⁰ Numerous official statements, 24-hour news cycles and back channel communiqués degraded clear communication as well.⁵¹ Only the proposed Rambouillet Agreement communicated NATO desired behaviors clearly.

The Rambouillet Agreement required that Milosevic withdraw, end repression, accept an international military presence in Kosovo and ensure the safe return of refugees. Rambouillet also proposed semi-autonomous

⁴⁷ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 432-3.

⁴⁸ Thies, "Compellence Failure or Coercive Success," 246.

⁴⁹ Thies, "Compellence Failure or Coercive Success," 248.

⁵⁰ Stigler, "A Clear Victory for Air Power," 133-135.

⁵¹ Although Douglas argues messages were received within Serbia, however, clarity of these messages is difficult to judge. Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 599.

governance in Kosovo as part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia).⁵² With this agreement NATO representatives clearly articulated NATO's expectations of Milosevic to Serbian representatives. That Milosevic did not assign any credibility to the threat does not remove the agreement's strength as a communication mechanism. It merely highlights the depths to which NATO lacked credibility by 1999.

The failure at the end to convince Milosevic of NATO's intent to carry through with the threat of force was due in part to poor communication. Inconsistent or unclear messaging instantly transmitted in a media saturated environment did little to bolster the effectiveness of all forms of coercive efforts against Serbia.

Capability

Combined, NATO military capability was suitable to implement coercive force Kosovo. While the bulk of military capabilities resided in the U.S., NATO members possessed significant forces. However, political restraints restricted the use of NATO forces. Avoiding collateral damage, for example, was a significant limiting factor.⁵³ Predictably, NATO leaders viewed airpower as a low-risk option to avoid collateral damage.⁵⁴ Airpower's seductiveness, however, also led NATO to focus solely on achieving coercion through airpower. As Byman and Waxman remind us, "policy makers and military official must recognize when reliance on air power may undermine...credibility."⁵⁵

The environmental conditions in and over Serbia also diminished the striking power of NATO military forces. Unlike Iraq, the Serb military hid relatively easily in the densely forested mountains. Generally, a static and hidden army dilutes airpower's striking ability. NATO further restricted

⁵² Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo, "Rambouillet Agreement," http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ksvo_rambouillet_text.html.

⁵³ Byman and Waxman, "Kosovo," 33.

⁵⁴ Byman and Waxman, "Kosovo," 38.

⁵⁵ Byman and Waxman, "Kosovo," 38.

operational altitudes to lessen the threat and possibility of losing aircrew. Coupled with concerns over collateral damage, these environmental or physical impediments would reduce air power's effectiveness.

Thus far, this study has avoided the issue of whether ground forces were a legitimate NATO capability. Like airpower, NATO had the necessary capability. Yet any ground action in Kosovo would likely cost NATO dearly. The concern over casualties limited discussion of this option.⁵⁶ President Clinton's aversion to military action likely further diminished the possibility of an invasion. Given the comprehensive concern over committing ground forces, it is doubtful they were a legitimate force in the strength needed to coerce.

Unrestrained by politics, NATO possessed the capability to carry out a wide range of threats by force. However, as a deeply political engagement, airpower again was the only feasible option. While the antiseptic promises of airpower may have seduced NATO into an overreliance on airpower, OAF did coerce Milosevic. Thus, we must explore the mechanism of this coercion to understand the efficacy of the OAF AEZ.

Coercive Mechanisms

Disinclined to use ground forces, NATO turned to a coercive air operation. Coercers must apply viable threats correctly to achieve coercion. The air war over Kosovo attempted to trigger all four of the coercive mechanism to varying degrees. The debate over airpower's success in Kosovo centers on which mechanism caused capitulation. As this section discusses, NATO initially sought to trigger the denial mechanism. However, the data suggests that political destabilization was likely the primary coercive mechanism.

Direct Pressure

⁵⁶ Stigler, "A Clear Victory for Air Power," 137.

Contrary to the opinion of OAF Air Forces Commander, Lt. Gen. Michael Short, air power had at most an incidental role in manipulating Milosevic through direct pressure.⁵⁷ NATO avoided targets directly related to Milosevic. Instead, NATO utilized non-military coercive instruments such as travel bans and asset freezes.⁵⁸ Political restraints and concerns over the legality of assassination made targeting Milosevic directly untenable to coalition warfare.

Weakening

Many of the targets attacked by NATO contributed to the general military and economic weakening of Serbia, but the evidence suggests that this mechanism had little effect on Milosevic's decision calculus. The NATO air campaign damaged static military support infrastructure but was less effective against Serbian forces in Kosovo.⁵⁹ Because Milosevic was unconcerned with Serbia's overall economic well-being, what economic degradation NATO caused had little influence on his final capitulation. Even non-military coercive instruments, such as the threat of losing \$6 to 8 billion in reconstruction aid, did little to degrade Milosevic's hold on power.⁶⁰ Milosevic hardly cared for state well-being and thus was unaffected with threats to the military and economic strength of Serbia.

Denial

The denial mechanism is widely cited as the most probable mechanism for coercing Milosevic. Milosevic's objectives for Kosovo were to maintain sovereign control, eliminate the KLA and alter the Kosovo ethnic balance. Only a ground invasion would have seriously threatened Milosevic's ability to reach these objectives.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 56.

⁵⁸ Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 93-94.

⁵⁹ Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 95-96.

⁶⁰ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 593.

⁶¹ Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 92.

There is no widely accepted evidence that a ground invasion significantly entered into Milosevic's calculus. The KLA was too weak to achieve victory with NATO air support and NATO's mixed signals diluted the credibility of the ground threat. Pape points to reserve mobilizations and logistic preparations as evidence to support the credibility of the threat.⁶² Despite such preparations, there is little evidence to suggest ground forces were a serious NATO option. President Clinton repeatedly discounted the use of ground forces and the U.S. Congress specifically required additional congressional authorizations prior to a ground invasion.⁶³ Again, the lack of consensus amongst NATO and member nations' fears of casualties likely diminished the credibility of the ground threat.⁶⁴

Denial succeeds primarily against an adversary whose strategy uses military forces to achieve its ends. Weather and elusive Serbian field forces further confounded NATO's ability to achieve significant gains against Serbian ground forces. Thus, without a credible ground threat, NATO was unable to trigger coercion through denial.

Political Destabilization

Popular unrest and power base erosion are the primary elements of the erosion of political support for the leader in question. In this case, only power base erosion had direct effect on Milosevic. Popular support of the regime appears steadfast despite bombings.⁶⁵ In fact, Douglas notes, "the citizens of Belgrade did not focus the blame for their misery on Milosevic."⁶⁶ While Hosmer argues that the threat of unrestrained bombing was the final factor in swaying Milosevic, he overemphasizes Milosevic's care for the general populace. Facing the pain of future and expanded air strikes, it is more likely that

⁶² Pape, "True Worth of Air Power," 6.

⁶³ Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 91.

⁶⁴ Stigler, "Clear Victory for Air Power," 139, Lake, "Limits of Coercive Airpower," 92.

⁶⁵ Pape, "True Worth of Air Power," 6.

⁶⁶ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 592.

Milosevic's concern was for the welfare of the political elite—the true power base of the regime—rather than an empathetic general population.

Without the support of the political elite, Milosevic could not remain in power. Hence, a threat to the stability of this support is the most viable explanation of final submission. In parallel with travel and economic sanctions targeted against Serbian elite, NATO expanded to “dual-use” and “crony” targets in May 1999. As a result, “elite discontent...was visible” and trending against Milosevic.⁶⁷ For years, Kosovo was the issue that kept Milosevic in power. Yet he appeared willing to give up Kosovo to secure support from acrimonious elites. Furthermore, NATO shifted its demands from complete autonomy for Kosovo, giving Milosevic another reason to accept and shore up his power base. Finally, the loss of Russian support likely darkened any hope of outlasting NATO. In the end, rather than watch both his international and domestic power bases erode, he submitted to the new NATO demands.⁶⁸

Outcomes

On June 3, 1999, Slobodan Milosevic accepted NATO's peace plan for Kosovo. NATO thus compelled a cessation of ethnic terror, forced a withdrawal of Serbian troops, ensured the return of Albanian refugees and compelled Milosevic to accept a political with a high degree of Kosovar autonomy. The Allied Force AEZ was the predominant factor of success. However, several salient issues are important to the coercive efficacy of the air exclusion zones.

First, while NATO attempted coercion through both denial and political destabilization mechanisms, this study posits that political destabilization was the predominant coercive mechanism. Given Milosevic's desire to stay in power, it is logical to conclude that destabilizing his core power base would have profound effects. NATO specifically applied coercive pressure to the

⁶⁷ Lake, “Limits of Coercive Airpower,” 107-8.

⁶⁸ Lake, “Limits of Coercive Airpower,” 109.

political elite. Striking dual-use or crony targets eventually delivered the pain directly to the “governing clique.”⁶⁹

It is also important to note the synergistic effects of bank and travel freezes upon the elite. Without an ability to escape and facing increasingly personal air strikes, Kosovo became less important than regime survival. Moreover, the fact that the targeting of crony targets increased immediately before Milosevic capitulate demonstrates a causal relationship between power base dissolution and peace.

Second, coercion required a highly integrated political-military coercive strategy. The credibility of NATO threats during Allied Force illustrates how a lack of coherent strategy can dilute the coercive value of an effort. Based on erroneous beliefs about coercion in Bosnia, NATO leaders believed Allied Force would coerce in short order. However, disconnected goals and indistinct strategy reduced the efficacy of the coercive effort.

The Allied Force AEZ significantly raised the probability of manipulating Milosevic’s behavior but was not the only key coercive instrument. A complete coercive strategy including economic and diplomatic coercive instruments was vital. Moreover, had NATO articulated a clear strategy early in planning, a credible ground threat coupled with the AEZ may have coerced Milosevic sooner. A truly credible air-ground threat combined with the Russian unwillingness to see NATO invade would likely have reduced the time needed to coerce Milosevic.

None of the force threats were viable without, at the very least, a clear and consistent NATO strategic communication plan. A comprehensive coercive strategy melding threats with actual statements in consistent messages may have caused Milosevic pause prior to his Kosovo offensives. This conclusion has the benefit of hindsight, but the overwhelming inconsistency in message afforded virtually no hope early OAF coercive efforts success.

⁶⁹ Douglas, *Hitting Home*, 595.

Third, strategic context matters. After fumbling Kosovo for over a decade, NATO could not avoid the issue. Fortunately, Russia, a key ally in Milosevic's mind, offered only conditional support to Serbia. Russia balanced the need for Western aid against a commitment to a former Communist ally. In pushing the final peace plan, they demonstrated to Milosevic that he could no longer expect absolute support. Losing his key ally eliminated an important component of his strategy.

NATO's desire to remain relevant in the post-Cold War international system also allowed for cohesion that may not always exist. This cohesion is striking considering the varied interests involved. Irrespective of the problems of consensus, the European desire to be a key player on the international stage was a critical condition to success.

In the final assessment, NATO was victorious in coercing Milosevic because their strategy, regardless of its origins, applied coercive pressure in concert with the strategic context. When hollow threats proved ineffective, an air exclusion zone delivered. NATO combined the application of force within a broader coercive strategy that coalesced into a winning formula centered on political destabilization.

Chapter 4

Libya

This chapter analyzes the air exclusion zone implemented over Libya from March to October of 2011. The international community implemented the AEZ (specifically a no-fly zone) to prohibit Gaddafi from committing mass civilian atrocities in Libya.¹ The NATO response, Operation Unified Protector (OUP),² is unique due to its broad international support. This case is also important because it was both the first new military operation for the United States after the 2003 Iraq War and President Obama's first major use of coercive force. These new dynamics add different context than the past cases.

Correlating the effects produced by the air exclusion zone with the case's outcome is difficult. The international community achieved its primary goals, but was the air exclusion zone a coercive factor? Moreover, was OUP coercion at all or merely air support within an internal civil war? This chapter endeavors to address these questions by reviewing the background, coercive criteria and coercive mechanisms of the case. The analysis suggests that given the nature of the adversary and the strategic environment, coercion was difficult to achieve by any means, but the air exclusion zone certainly played a dominant role in the outcome.

Background

The Arab uprisings, known as the "Arab Spring," were the roots of the rebellion in Libya. The proximity of uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt likely enhanced underlying disenfranchisement in eastern Libya. Popular unrest was growing in Libya prior to the Arab Spring uprisings and the Libyan government

¹ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on the situation in Libya," The White House, Office of Press Secretary, March 18, 2011.

² For brevity, this chapter uses OUP as the operational designation for the Libya operations. The effort transferred from a United States-led operation, designated Operation Odyssey Dawn, to NATO on March 31, 2011. Unified Protector was the operational designation until it concluded in October 2011

addressed some concerns through conciliatory efforts. By mid-February, however, protests in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi quickly grew into full-scale rebellion. Anti-Gaddafi rebels advanced through February capturing the town of Misrata and key harbors in Brega and Ra's Lanuf.

Facing an inchoate civil war, Gaddafi forces went on the offensive in early March, recapturing Brega and assaulting the rebel strongholds of Misrata and Benghazi. Libyan Security forces not only attacked rebel forces but also targeted residential areas and protests. International calls to stop the bloodshed began amid the government's attempts to recover its losses. With mounting civilian casualties, the United Nations condemned the attacks and called for Gaddafi to withdraw.³ Citing the fear of mass casualties, an international coalition responded with arms embargos, economic sanctions and the OUP air exclusion zone. The civil war continued but by August, Gaddafi was dead and the rebels controlled Libya.

Actors

The variety and complexity of actors complicates the analysis for this case as it did in the previous cases. Like the other cases, the analysis instead focuses on the key participants with the greatest influence in decision-making. This section focuses on three primary actors: Muammar Gaddafi, the United States and the international community. Gaddafi, with supreme authority over Libya since 1969, was the target of coercion. Again, this section separates the United States from the broader coercer community due to its hegemonic position and its large force contribution during the early phases of coercion (OOD). Rather than attempt to discern every nation's unique qualities, this study views the international community as a holistic unit. Rarely has an

³ United States Mission to the United Nations, "Fact Sheet: UN Security Council Resolution 1970, Libya Sanctions," February 26, 2011, <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/2011/157194.htm>, accessed January 24, 2012.

international community come together to coerce a rogue leader as it did in this case. Viewing the international community as a single actor frames the analysis within a coercer-target relationship that is more valuable than parsing individual nations. The unique qualities of the actors in this case significantly contributed to the probability of manipulating Gaddafi's behavior.

Gaddafi

Muammar Gaddafi was a man of many descriptions: charismatic, temperamental, complicated, irrational, chameleon and a survivor. In fact, any of these terms fit some portion of his complex character. Coercing this "mad dog of the middle east" requires peeling back the complexity to understand his values.⁴

From his assumption of power following a 1969 coup, Gaddafi ruled Libya with an iron fist.⁵ A true authoritarian, Gaddafi did not hesitate to crush opponents who threatened his power. Although not unique in his brutality, Gaddafi was the first dictator to "baldly announce [his] intention to carry out such a campaign."⁶ Following Gaddafi's rise to power, Vandewalle notes that Libyans found themselves in an "Orwellian nightmare where even small utterances of protest could lead to disappearances" or worse.⁷

Gaddafi's mystical and self-fulfilling views thwart analysis of his behavior. *The Green Book*, Gaddafi's ideological manifesto, has been described as "a slim collection of incoherent ramblings" and useless as a tool to understand him.⁸ Throughout his life, Gaddafi donned various ideological hats—Arab nationalism, Islamist or pan-Africanism—only to discard them.

⁴ President Reagan labeled Gaddafi this in April 1996. *The Two-Way*, NPR's News Blog; "Flashback: Reagan Calls Gadhafi The 'Mad Dog Of The Middle East'," blog entry by Mark Memmott, February 22, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2011/02/22/133970620/flashback-reagan-calls-gadhafi-the-mad-dog-of-the-middle-east> (accessed March 26, 2012).

⁵ Dirk Vandewalle, "The Many Qaddafis," *New York Times*, February 24, 2011.

⁶ Bonnie Cordes, "Qaddafi: Idealist and Revolutionary Philanthropist," *RAND Paper Series*, (Santa Monica: 1986), 5.

⁷ Vandewalle, "The Many Qaddafis."

⁸ Vandewalle "The Many Qaddafis."

Bonnie Cordes perhaps best captures Gaddafi's idiosyncratic personality: "Egypt's Anwar Sadat was the first, and not the last, to publicly declare the view of Qaddafi as insane, fanatic, and unstable, destroying any credibility the leader may have had. Such a characterization makes approaches to him in the traditional manner somewhat futile. Because he does act on principle—based on a purely "Qaddafian" morality—rather than in response to pressure, he cannot be influenced, particularly as he continues to see his opposition to the international status quo as "an article of faith."⁹ Cordes' view of Gaddafi is sound given her 1983 perspective. However, recent international rapprochement with Libya leads one to conclude that the international community could coerce Gaddafi.

Gaddafi's malleable ideologies demonstrated some rationality and pragmatism, but also led to him placing regime survival as a top priority. As Craig Black argues, "He will adjust the mix of his ideology—a little socialism one day, some Islam the next, a heavy dose of populism—to keep the revolution (i.e., his life and power) alive."¹⁰ In addition, Gaddafi's recent moves away from WMD procurement and terrorism highlight his pragmatic nature. Debate continues to try and explain Gaddafi's metamorphosis.¹¹ Reasons aside, Gaddafi calculated that his power was more secure through policy changes.¹² An iron-fisted rule and malleable ideology also suggest a desire to remain in power. With regime survival as Gaddafi's key concern, fear was the primary variable in his decision calculus. However, Gaddafi could not stay in power

⁹ Cordes, "Qaddafi," 9.

¹⁰ Craig R. Black, "Muammar Qaddafi and Libya's Strategic Culture," *The Counterproliferation Papers*, Future Warfare Series No. 8, USAF Counterproliferation Center, 2008, 264.

¹¹ Miroslav Nincic, "Getting What you Want: Positive Inducements in International Relations," *International Security*, Vol 35, No. 1, (Summer 2010), 128-183, 174-183, Martin Asser, "The Muammar Gaddafi Story," *BBC News Africa*, October 21, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12688033> (accessed March 20, 2012). William Safire, "Spinning into Control," *New York Times*, January 12, 2004.

¹² Nincic argues that fears of popular unrest due to long-term economic sanctions drove changes. Nincic, "Getting What you Want," 176. Others, such as Asser, cite fear of U.S. invasion and a fear of a similar fate to Hussein drove Gaddafi change. Asser, "The Muammar Gaddafi Story."

without the cooperation and support from his regime's power base. But, this power base is less identifiable than past cases.

Gaddafi's power base rested with both traditional tribal and political allegiances. But, identifying tribal allegiances is easier than defining Gaddafi's political allegiances. Outside of Gaddafi's sons, it is difficult to distinguish influential political elites because Gaddafi frequently purged officials to avoid any one individual gaining too much power.¹³ Consequently, "temporary elites" shifted with the regime's needs and had little relevance to Gaddafi's grip on power.¹⁴ Instead, Gaddafi worked within the tribal structures to build a power base. Consequently, Gaddafi relied heavily on members of his tribe within Libya's security apparatus and military for regime security.¹⁵ At the end, only his tribe remained completely loyal.

The economic welfare of various support groups was a critical component to regime security. Revenues from Libya's oil resources were thus critical to maintaining regime support.¹⁶ As Black explains, "when oil revenues dry up, so does the ability of the Qaddafi regime to provide financial benefits to his support base."¹⁷ Economic sanctions focused pressure on Gaddafi's reliance on oil revenues.

Of the various descriptors, chameleon best fits Gaddafi. Understanding his rationale or reasoning frustrates analysis. At the very least, Gaddafi based his actions on fear and calculated risk to maintain power. When faced with rebellions similar to those that deposed his neighbors, Gaddafi resorted to force. His behavior reflects his primary values for regime maintenance. These values provided avenues by which opponents could manipulate his behavior.

United States

¹³ Amal S. M. Obeidi, "Political Elites in Libya since 1969," in *Libya Since 1969: Qadhafi's Revolution Revisited*, ed. Dirk Vandewalle (New York: Macmillan, 2008), 123.

¹⁴ Obeidi, "Political Elites in Libya," 124.

¹⁵ Obeidi, "Political Elites in Libya," 123.

¹⁶ Obeidi, "Political Elites in Libya," 50.

¹⁷ Black, "Muammar Qaddafi and Libya's Strategic Culture," 264.

Rather than a “lead and others follow” approach, the United States’ adopted a more cooperative leadership role in Libya. Despite a different approach, traditional United States interests and its actions during the Libya crisis illustrate several important contextual elements.

First, traditional foreign policy concerns guided U.S. action, tempered by the fact that this was President Obama’s first use of military force abroad. The Obama Administration likely recognized that Operation Iraqi Freedom had cost the United States international prestige. Libya offered a legitimate and noble multilateral effort that demonstrated U.S. power without U.S. unilateralism.¹⁸

The incongruity in the Administration’s public statements, however, highlighted the internal conflict over intervention in Libya. For example, even when defending U.S. involvement U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said, “I don’t think it’s a vital interest of the United States, but we clearly have an interest there.”¹⁹ Members of Congress also questioned the value of intervention.²⁰ Given the vocal debate, President Obama considered a more measured approach. The President ruled out an intervention using ground forces. By ruling out ground forces, airpower was the remaining option. While a “no-fly zone” was the *nom du jour*, there is little evidence of agreement over what leaders wanted. Many used the term no-fly zone but actually desired an AEZ.²¹ In the end, the air exclusion zone was the coercive force option of choice if not in name.

¹⁸ Michael O’Hanlon, “Libya vindicates Obama’s multilateral leadership,” CNN World Online, August 22, 2011, <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/22/libya-vindicates-obamas-multilateral-leadership/>, accessed May 16, 2012.

¹⁹ Robert Gates quoted in Jon Hilsenrath, “Gates Says Libya Not Vital National Interest,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704308904576226704261420430.html> (accessed March 20, 2012).

²⁰ *Perspectives on the Crisis in Libya: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate*, 112th Cong. 58 (April 6, 2011).

²¹ The exchange between Sen. John McCain and USAF Chief of Staff Gen Norton Schwartz during Senate Armed Services testimony reflects how “no-fly zone” was used to represent broader exclusion operations. U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Hearing on the Proposed Fiscal 2012 and Future Year Defense Authorization Budget Request Related to the Air Force*, 112th Cong., 1st sess., March 17, 2011.

Second, the humanitarian aspect weighed heavily in U.S. calculations. Memories of crises in Rwanda, Sudan and the Balkans influenced the decision to intervene. Aides recalling past genocides strongly encouraged the President to act.²² Thus, the administration weighed the cost of intervention against the need to avoid another humanitarian calamity.

Finally, the United States' desired ends were publicly uncertain as the operation began. Officially, the Administration's goals reflected those outlined in UNSCR 1973.²³ Rather than removal of the Gaddafi regime, the main intent was to coerce Gaddafi to stop attacking civilians and provide civilian protection and aid.²⁴ However, statements by those within the Administration lack clarity. Adm. Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, said, "I think it's very uncertain how this ends." Without official declaration, many concluded that regime change was an unstated goal.²⁵

The United States thus entered the Libyan operations with both clearly stated goals and implicit, but largely public, goals. On the surface neither humanitarian nor regime change goals were inherently negative. However, the compliance costs associated with various goals were significantly different. This dichotomy would substantially affect the efforts to coerce Gaddafi.

International Community

²² Helene Cooper and Steven Lee Myers, "Obama Takes Hard Line With Libya After Shift by Clinton", *New York Times*, March 18 2011.

²³ United Nations Security Council (SC), Resolution 1973, March 17, 2011, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/268/39/PDF/N1126839.pdf?OpenElement>.

²⁴ In March 2011, the U.N. only mandated civilian protection. However, the various international actions (embargos, finance freezes, military action) demonstrate an underlying effort to coerce Gaddafi to withdraw. By May, the NATO air component commander's intent was to conduct "a coercive air campaign to compel armed factions...to agree to an enduring ceasefire." I have surmised that, at a minimum, the U.N. would have been satisfied if Gaddafi agreed to a ceasefire—a possible coercive outcome. Thus, this study treats OUP as a coercive engagement in order to understand possible coercive mechanisms involved. Commander's intent from Op Unified Protector (OUP) Mission Brief, February 29, 2012.

²⁵ Karen DeYoung and Peter Finn, "Questions raised about U.S. role and goals in Libya," *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/questions-raised-about-us-role-and-goals-in-libya/2011/03/20/ABus9h3_story.html and Yuri Zinin, "The War in Libya: Today and Tomorrow," *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics*, Vol. 57 (2011): 85-94, 85, 89.

Unified Protector was certainly a unified effort, garnering international support from east and west. France and the United Kingdom championed intervention and NATO assumed the leadership mantle for the military options. Unlike the 1999 war with Serbia, participation from outside NATO was robust. The Arab League supported action and Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) contributed forces. Although the broad alliance established strong international legitimacy, the alliance had its own interests and concerns.

Many in the international community saw Libya as a chance to exercise the nascent “responsibility to protect” (R2P) doctrine.²⁶ The R2P doctrine provided an umbrella of legitimacy, but also constrained the international effort.²⁷ Thus, OUP’s goals were limited to protecting civilians and enforcing an arms embargo rather than regime change. These limits allowed for consensus within NATO and the U.N. Security Council and the resulting resolutions guided the implementation of the OUP air exclusion zone.

Arab involvement in OUP reduced a significant hurdle to achieving international legitimacy and hurdles to action. As the first time the international community intervened in the post-Arab Spring civil unrest, Arab league approval of action was an important endorsement.²⁸ Gaddafi’s pariah status likely allowed Arab nations to support protecting civilians. The direct participation of Qatar and UAE, which both supported the repression of Arab Spring protests in Bahrain, illustrates Gaddafi’s isolation within the Arab community. There were limits, however, to Arab approval.

Arab nations’ narrow interpretation of the no-fly zone authorization, however, would strain coalition relations. The Arab League only viewed

²⁶ Anne-Marie Slaughter Blog, “Was the Libyan Intervention Really an Intervention?” *The Atlantic*, August 26, 2011, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/08/was-the-libyan-intervention-really-an-intervention/244175/>.

²⁷ R2P deems it appropriate to intervene in a humanitarian crisis but limits the intervention (only stopping civilian deaths in the Libya case). Because the UNSCR authorizes military intervention, the application of R2P is inherently biased and action is often constrained to achieve consensus.

²⁸ Ethan Bronner and David E. Sanger, “Arab League Endorses No-Flight Zone Over Libya,” *New York Times*, March 12, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/world/middleeast/13libya.html?pagewanted=all>.

opposing Gaddafi's attacking warplanes as permissible. NATO departures from this strict interpretation would cause Arab countries to waver on support. While Arab participation complicated coalition politics, it is doubtful the world would have acted without the Arab League endorsement of UNSCR 1973.

By March 17, 2011, the international majority stood behind military action in Libya. UNSCR 1973 defined the objective: "take all necessary measures...to protect civilian and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in [Libya]...while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form."²⁹ This resolution also imposed a flight ban and tightened the previously established arms embargo and asset freeze.³⁰ Thus, Unified Protector moved forward under a UN umbrella with broad international support.

Coercive Criteria

Muammar Gaddafi's distorted views of politics and society make understanding what influenced his behavior challenging. Hints of irrationality indicated Gaddafi would be difficult to coerce. Yet, his past behavior changes conflict with such a view. This section analyzes the credibility of the international threats, the communication of these threats and the availability of resources to carry out such threats. One can gain insight into the coercive efficacy of air exclusion zones by understanding Gaddafi's perceptions of his opponents' threats.

Credibility

Attempts to comprehend Gaddafi's behavior are complex and confounding. Identifying cause and effect between past coercive engagements (e.g. the U.S. strikes in 1986, U.N. embargos) and behavior changes is elusive.

²⁹ United Nations Security Council (SC), Resolution 1973, March 17, 2011.

³⁰ United Nations Security Council (SC), Resolution 1970, February 26, 2011, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/245/58/PDF/N1124558.pdf?OpenElement>.

This section examines the degree to which international threats were credible by identifying key Gaddafi perceptions of the outside world.

Libya's recent normalized relations within the international system likely led Gaddafi to believe he had more leeway in internal actions. Prior to 2003, direct punishment (e.g. the 1986 strikes) or sanctions were the typical responses to Gaddafi's intransigence. But, as Gaddafi renounced terrorism and WMDs, the world gradually shifted to inducements to manipulate his behavior. Western investment in Libya increased and the international community rewarded Libya with its election to the human rights council in 2010.³¹ Unlike Iraq, Libya appeared open to change. The world placed its hopes on improving the conditions of Libyan society on soft power rather than punishment. So, one can conclude that Gaddafi did not believe the world would use force and such threats lacked credibility.

The lack of intervention by the international community in other Arab nations may have reinforced such perceptions. The international community met forceful tamp downs of Arab Spring protests in Bahrain, Iran, and Yemen with only diplomatic admonishment. Prior to the beginning of OUP, the international community did not deem these crackdowns worthy of violating national sovereignty. Add the historical precedent of inaction in Rwanda, Bosnia and the Sudan and we can conclude that Gaddafi likely saw such threats of force as hollow.

Fissures in the international commitment to Libyan intervention likely reinforced Gaddafi's belief that if the world intervened he could survive, as consensus was not as broad it as might have appeared on the surface. Germany abstained from the vote to authorize NATO to execute the air exclusion zone.³² Russia was publicly hesitant and abstained from the vote on

³¹ U.S. Department of State, "Background Notes: Libya," March 9, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5425.htm>, accessed March 22, 2012.

³² Mark Hallam, "Berlin defends abstention on Libya action, considers alternative aid," *Deutsche Welle*, March 18, 2011, <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,14922890,00.html>, accessed March 23, 2012.

UNSCR 1973.³³ Gaddafi had retreated to isolation when faced with past international condemnation. It is likely he felt secure and thought he could wait for small fissures to grow into deleterious divides in international will. This and other previous factors highlight why Gaddafi possibly believed his opponents' threats lacked credibility.

The threat of force also lacked credibility because it did not affect Gaddafi's cost-benefit analysis. Gaddafi's tenuous position by March left him few options, with his past actions suggesting he would accept nothing less than full power. Faced with a civil war and the prospect of regime change, Gaddafi could only flee or respond with force to save his regime. Even with a slim probability of success, the possible benefit of acting (remaining in power) far outweighed the cost of inaction (exile or death). International threats could only be credible if the cost they imposed outweighed the benefit of continued violence. If Gaddafi believed NATO goal was regime change, he likely concluded that he was facing death (or at best a war crimes trial) if he surrendered. Given these choices, there is little NATO could threaten that would alter Gaddafi's behavior. NATO's implicit regime change goal put Gaddafi on "death ground" and diluted the effectiveness of NATO threats.³⁴

Communication

The international community's debate over the Libyan response further shaped the viability of the coercive threats. Debate translated into public uncertainty over the actual objectives and rules of engagement. The uncertainty created conflicting public statements and actions did not clearly communicate to Gaddafi the threat and desired behavior.

The dichotomy over goals may have had the most significant effect on coercive success. As noted earlier, UNSCR 1973 clearly outlined threats and

³³ Isabel Gorst and Neil Buckley, "Medvedev and Putin clash over Libya," *Financial Times*, March 21, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/2e62b08e-53d2-11e0-a01c-00144feab49a.html#axzz1qKNB6IRY>, accessed March 23, 2012.

³⁴ "...in death ground, flight." Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford, New York: 2005), 209.

expected behaviors but did not specify Gaddafi's removal. However, statements by world leaders implicitly indicated regime change was the true goal.³⁵ Such statements likely dashed any hope Gaddafi may have had for negotiated settlement and a gracious exit from power. Without options, he continued his efforts to save his regime.

Gaddafi's early actions indicate there may have been room for negotiation. Prior to the first coalition attacks, Gaddafi offered a ceasefire.³⁶ This was either a delaying tactic or evidence of his willingness to change his behavior. Given his record of brutality, the ceasefire offer was probably a delaying tactic. Yet, the ceasefire may have indicated a willingness to negotiate. Given implicit goals of regime change, however, Gaddafi probably understood that stopping the violence was not the true desired behavior. The viability of coercive threats diminished as he concluded that his removal from power was the true desired behavior, demonstrating the challenge of ensuring a match between communicated threat and desired behaviors match. It also highlights the potential for missed opportunity.

The conflict over the implementation of the air exclusion zone further clouded communication. The Arab League endorsed intervention based on the implementation of a "no-fly zone."³⁷ Their understanding was that coalition aircraft would prevent Gaddafi from using the Libyan Air Force to strike civilians. Although most of the Arab governments remained silent as operations over Libya continued, Arab League statements against western intervention communicated possible weakening of international resolve.³⁸ Such weakening reinforced Gaddafi's cost-benefit calculation and diluted the coalition's threats.

³⁵ Barack Obama, Speech on Libya, February 23, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/24/us/politics/24obama-statement-libya.html>.

³⁶ NBC and msnbc.com News Services, "Gadhafi blasts 'crusader' aggression after strikes," March 19, 2011, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42164455/ns/world_news-mideastn_africa, accessed March 26, 2012.

³⁷ Edward Cody, "Arab League condemns broad Western bombing campaign in Libya" *Washington Post*, March 20, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/arab-league-condemns-broad-bombing-campaign-in-libya/2011/03/20/AB1pSg1_story.html.

³⁸ Cody, "Arab League condemns broad Western bombing campaign in Libya."

Reluctant international statements about the use of ground forces further diminished the viability of threats. President Obama stated that ground intervention was “not something we can afford to repeat in Libya.”³⁹ Arab unease with any western intervention further lessened the threat of ground invasion. While necessary to reach international consensus, such statements diminished Gaddafi’s fears of removal through an Iraqi Freedom-style ground invasion. Less equivocal statements on the use of ground forces might have encouraged Gaddafi to reconsider his position.

In all, the coalition sufficiently communicated its threats and desired behaviors. Although protecting civilians was the top priority, coalition statements suggest that regime change was also important. By communicating these goals, the coalition placed Gaddafi where his only choice was to fight to the end. Communicating differently may have opened the possibility of reaching a settlement that did not include Gaddafi’s death.

Capability

As with the past cases, U.S. and NATO capability existed to carry out a wide range of threats and the addition of non-NATO members increased capability. Yet consensus requirements still defined available forces and use of force limits.

With ground units off the table, the air exclusion zone was the remaining force option within Libya’s borders. Unified Protector rules of engagement prohibited “taking sides” and focused attacks on any belligerent actors attacking or threatening to attack civilians.⁴⁰ It is possible though that the threat of air strikes did not persuade Gaddafi. He had watched Saddam Hussein withstand over a decade of western air strikes. Moreover, Gaddafi maintained power following the 1986 U.S. air strikes. From experience, one

³⁹ David D. Kirkpatrick, Steven Erlanger and Elisabeth Bumiller, “Allies open air assault on Qaddafi’s forces in Libya” *New York Times*, March 19, 2011.

⁴⁰ Lt. Gen. Ralph J. Jodice, Op Unified Protector (OUP) Mission Brief, February 29, 2012.

can conclude air strikes alone were likely to be unsuitable as a coercive tool against Gaddafi.

What the air exclusion zone did provide was indirect support to the anti-Gaddafi forces. Alexander Bernard described the primary value of an AEZ as “air cover.”⁴¹ In that vein, Unified Protector tacitly provided the revolutionary groups the protection needed to fight against regime forces. While not a coordinated effort, NATO leveled the playing field to a degree by which Libyans decided their own destiny.

Coercive Mechanisms

The character of Gaddafi’s regime and the international community’s goals limited the degree by which the coalition could manipulate Gaddafi’s behavior through all four coercive mechanisms. The section discusses the viability of all four, but only two—denial and political destabilization—were potentially viable mechanisms. The analysis suggests that although denial and political destabilization were likely mechanisms of coercion, the jury remains out on the total degree of contribution.

Weakening

Given Gaddafi cared little for his citizens’ overall well-being, triggering coercion through weakening was likely unfeasible. As Byman and Waxman observed, “many autocratic governments care little about the well-being of the country as a whole.”⁴² As Gaddafi fits this description, the weakening mechanism had little effect. Moreover, the political constraints prohibited the large-scale infrastructure destruction needed to weaken his political control. Thus, Unified Protector did not focus on triggering the weakening mechanism for regime change.

⁴¹ Alexander Bernard. “Lesson from Iraq and Bosnia on the Theory and Practice of No-fly zones,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, (September 2004), 456.

⁴² Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman. *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 77.

Decapitation

Likewise, NATO did not directly target Gaddafi; thus, the decapitation mechanism was also not a factor. NATO did strike key command facilities to cut the command and control of forces, but the intent was not decapitation.⁴³ Without data to suggest Gaddafi modified his behavior as a second order effect of these C2 strikes, it is difficult to conclude NATO triggered the decapitation mechanism.

Denial

The denial mechanism plays prominently in this case. As discussed above, Gaddafi's primary objective was to stay in power. His strategy was to use the loyal Libyan military to crush the rebellion and NATO designed its strategy to counter Gaddafi's ability to attack his people.

NATO succeeded in defeating Gaddafi's strategy through the establishment of the air exclusion zone. The AEZ first grounded the Libyan Air Force and then shifted to removing Gaddafi's ability to attack civilians by any means. As the Libyan Army lost strength in the face of air strikes and attacks by rebel ground forces, the tide shifted in favor of the anti-Gaddafi forces. By August, the anti-Gaddafi forces were back on the offensive and forced Gaddafi to flee Tripoli. Although defeat likely encouraged Gaddafi's departure, it is difficult to conclude a "win" for coercion via denial.

While achieving regime change, NATO did little to coerce or manipulate Gaddafi's behavior. The original NATO intent was to coerce Gaddafi to stop attacking civilians. As Byman and Waxman noted, "when the United States and its allies shifted the goal of the Libya operation to include Qaddafi's removal from power, the dynamics of the conflict also shifted: A tie—even if the U.N. Security Council mandate to 'protect civilians' is satisfied—means the

⁴³ NATO direction prohibited direct targeting of Gaddafi. Question and Answer with Lt Gen Jodice, February 29, 2012.

allies lose.”⁴⁴ Unified Protector allowed the Libyan civil war to take its course, ultimately deposing Gaddafi. There is little evidence to suggest NATO coerced Gaddafi to pull back from attacking civilians because NATO denied his strategy.

Political Destabilization

Although explicitly a denial campaign, OUP’s umbrella of protection allowed popular unrest. Unfortunately, it is difficult at the present time to gauge the degree to which the unrest in the capital influenced Gaddafi’s departure. With Gaddafi’s death, we may never know for sure whether it was the fear of the unrest or fear of the oncoming forces. This case does demonstrate that given certain freedom of action—provided by the NATO AEZ in this case—popular unrest could spread. Indirectly, NATO triggered the political destabilization mechanism in conjunction with the denial mechanism.

Outcomes

Gaddafi fled Tripoli in August and evaded his pursuers until his capture and death on October 23, 2011. Assessing coercion’s success is difficult due to the implicit goals of the international community. By most textbook definitions, coercion failed in Libya and a civil war succeeded. Determining the coercive success of this case requires analyzing the operation in terms of two goals: the efforts to stop attacks on civilians and those that supported regime change.

Operation Unified Protector did protect civilians from additional casualties. However, the AEZ did not persuade Gaddafi to stop attempts at tamping down protests. NATO’s denial strategy removed the means but did not

⁴⁴ Daniel Byman, and Matthew Waxman, “Libyan Limbo: Six Reasons why it’s been so tough to get Qaddafi to quit,” *Foreign Policy, The List Blog*, June 2, 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/02/libyan_limbo.

change the behavior. Recalling Byman and Waxman's earlier observation, the international community achieved a coercive "tie."

The international effort did set the conditions for anti-Gaddafi forces to succeed in toppling the regime. This outcome met at least the implicit desire to remove Gaddafi from power. However, regime change is not coercion. As Robert Pape argues, "If a coercive attempt is made but the war ends only when one side is decisively defeated, then *coercion* has failed, even if the coercer wins the war."⁴⁵ In terms of coercive success, OUP comes up short. Libya became a civil war and no longer a coercive engagement.

Although Unified Protector was implicitly a coercive effort, it failed at achieving its two key coercive goals. This reflects the difference between coercion and brute force: intent.⁴⁶ NATO tacitly intended to *threaten* Gaddafi into leaving power. In the end, however, the anti-Gaddafi rebels' brute force—under NATO cover—overcame Gaddafi's hold on power. Schelling states, "Coercion requires finding a bargain."⁴⁷ Unfortunately, there was little chance of striking a bargain between Gaddafi and the opposition. Despite NATO's intent, the outcome in Libya was due to brute force not coercion.

If not a coercive success, Unified Protector was, however, a success on other levels. It achieved a broad coalition focused on altruistic goals, enabled the removal of a ruthless dictator few will miss and allowed the people of Libya the hope of self-determination. Although designed to coerce, to characterize OUP as a coercive success is inaccurate. Thus, judging the efficacy of the OUP AEZ, one must remember it for what it achieved in fact if not by design.

In fact, the OUP AEZ may have been *too* successful; eventually giving the anti-Gaddafi forces an asymmetric—and powerful—advantage. The AEZ leveled the playing field, allowing the rebels to overwhelm Gaddafi eventually. Ironically, had the stalemate of June and July not broken, Gaddafi's behavior may have changed. It is possible that complementary coercive instruments

⁴⁵ Robert A. Pape. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 15.

⁴⁶ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 5.

⁴⁷ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 4.

(economic sanctions, arms embargo) would have increased pressure over time. The longer the effort went on, the higher the probability of a settlement short of regime change. In the end, NATO achieved its humanitarian goals and for that, we can count the OUP AEZ a success as an operation, if not necessarily one of coercion.



Chapter 5

Case Evaluation

Thus far, this project has reviewed three cases toward assessing the coercive efficacy of air exclusion zones. Although each is unique, parallels across cases highlight the significant parameters that fostered or inhibited coercion. Evaluating across cases for such parameters allows one to distill the coercive elements that are key contributors to success. This chapter reviews the salient points of the previous cases and then extracts the important coercive factors across the cases.

Case Review—Coercive Criteria

The following tables document the noteworthy issues with regard to the coercive conditions and mechanisms for the previous cases. Table 1 highlights the notable factors that influenced the three coercion criteria. Reviewing the cases, the points highlighted for credibility document those factors that influenced the coercer's will or commitment to carry out the threat. The communication lines reveal those factors that affected the ability of the coercer to communicate clearly the threat and desired behavior to the target entity. These lines include factors that inhibited the adversary's reception of the message. Finally, the review captures the degree to which the coercers had the capability to carry out the threat against a target.

Table 1: Case Summary: Coercive Criteria

Coercive Criteria	Case: Iraq	Case: Kosovo	Case: Libya
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Questioned Western commitment: believed the U.S. and others did not have the “stomach for war”- Eroding international support for coercive efforts would weaken coalition resolve to continue AEZ- International inaction to protect Shi’a demonstrated little international commitment in Hussein’s mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hollow threats and scant attention throughout prior decade diminished U.S./NATO credibility- NATO’s need to act with consensus diluted its credibility with Milosevic- Milosevic believed he could outlast NATO will to continue attacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Libya recent acceptance back into international community likely led Gaddafi to believe he had leeway.- Lack of action in Egypt, Yemen and Syria- International support based on limited goals—potential fissures in support- Cost of desired behavior (exile/death) overwhelmingly outweighed benefit of behavior
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The West was able to effectively communicate threats and desired behaviors for individual coercive engagements (e.g. OVW) but had more difficulty at the strategic level- Over time, patterns of deceit and lack of communication channels prohibited clear communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prior to OAF, NATO’s communication of threats and behaviors was inconsistent and mixed- Rambouillet agreement was critical tool of communication providing clear desired behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Disparity in desired behavior: stop attacking civilians (explicit) or leave power (implicit)<ul style="list-style-type: none">-- Public statements reflecting implicit goals clouded communication
Capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Capability existed but was diluted as Hussein shifted strategy during the course of campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Physical environment (mountains and dense forests) constrained air power- Ground force threat, while suspect, existed in background but did not increase probability of coercion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Capability sufficient to deny Gaddafi ability to use Libyan Army to attack civilians- Tacitly shifted balance of forces in favor of anti-Gaddafi movement

Source: Author’s Original Work

Credibility

The credibility of threats revolves around two important elements: the commitment (or perceived commitment) of the coercer and the adversary's cost benefit calculation. Across the cases these two factors significantly influenced the degree the coercer could manipulate the adversary's behavior. As predicted by coercion theory, the effectiveness of the air exclusion zone is relative to the degree that the coercer could demonstrate resolve or influence the opponent's cost-benefit calculation.¹

The perception of the coercer's commitment was significant in all cases. Prior to the execution of the AEZs, all three adversaries questioned the coercer's resolve to carry through with threats. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein believed the West did not have the stomach for war. In Hussein's mind, air strikes did not reach the level of war—only ground forces could do so. He correctly surmised prior to 2003 that the first Bush and Clinton Administrations were hesitant to escalate beyond air strikes. Thus, Hussein perceived the credibility of US threats absent ground forces as weak. In fact, Hussein complied only when faced with the deployment of ground forces as in Kuwait during OVW.

This trend is evident in Kosovo as well. Prior to Allied Force, U.S. Administrations and the international community threatened Serbia with force, but rarely carried through with the threat. Bosnia is one contrary example, but the world only reacted after the occurrence of significant atrocities. Thus, when the international community threatened Milosevic in order to stop the killing in Kosovo, he viewed these threats as hollow. NATO only reinforced this perception through bluffs such as Operation Determined Falcon.

The issue of commitment is not as clear in the Libyan case. Gaddafi may have assessed international commitment to act as low due to the lack of intervention against nations suppressing the of Arab Spring protests elsewhere

¹ Thomas C. Schelling. *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn. London: Yale University Press, 2008), 89.

in the region. Furthermore, his return from pariah status and re-integration into the international community may have led him to believe he had more leeway in internal issues. Yet, the clear resolution from the UN should have demonstrated a reasonable amount of international commitment. However, the internal threat to Gaddafi's regime was grave enough that he may not have factored international commitment into his decision-making. As a variable, it was not significant enough to offset his cost-benefit calculation.

The strength of the international coalitions aligned against the leaders further reinforced the perception of credibility. For example, by the early part of this decade, international cohesion for restrictions against Iraq was eroding quickly. France and Russia were vocal advocates of relaxing sanctions and other punitive actions. Similarly, coalition politics affected Kosovo and Libya. In both cases, the need for international legitimacy restrained the use of force. Recognizing the need for legitimacy, the three targets believed their opponent's cohesion would break down over time and considered such effects in their decision calculus. Milosevic, for example, believed he could outlast the air strikes until NATO cohesion broke down.² These findings echo Byman and Waxman who observed, "A more unified coalition will be better able to withstand the application of higher levels of force more decisively."³

Coercer commitment was thus a critical factor in success. Where the coercer could demonstrate clearly their willingness to carry out the threat and when cohesion remained tight, the coercion strategy achieved success. Successful engagements, especially operational level engagements such as OVW or Desert Strike, displayed both commitment and cohesion. In each case, unambiguous commitment and cohesion influenced the decision calculus of the adversary in favor of the coercer and the coercion strategy. Yet commitment and cohesion alone were not the sole means to success.

² Daniel L. Byman and Matthew C. Waxman, "Kosovo and the Great Air power Debate," *International Security*, (Spring 2004:5-38), 33.

³ Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman. *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 170.

Across cases, successful coercion also correlated to the adversary's assessment of the cost associated with the behavioral change. In the cases where the cost of the desired behavior was not existential, the probability of successful coercion was higher. For example, prior to 1997, containment of Iraq was the goal sought by the West. Hussein did not face a threat of removal from power and thus his decision calculus was not heavily weighted by extreme cost (death or exile) deliberations. The coalition was able to coerce Hussein during this timeframe. However, when the West shifted its goal to regime change, the cost of capitulation for Hussein became exorbitantly high and coercive efforts were less effective. In the end, only an invasion and regime change could impose high enough costs to achieve coalition objectives.

The other coalitions repeated this pattern in both Libya and Serbia. While at first implicit, the international community sought Gaddafi's removal. Faced with losing power, he likely viewed his options, providing little choice but to fight. In Libya, extreme costs impacted coercion negatively. NATO, on the contrary, did not stipulate Milosevic's removal from power in Serbia. Without a threat to his primary value, Milosevic had leeway to capitulate. Consequently, NATO's limited goals fostered coercion.

The high cost of capitulation in the Libya and Iraq cases reflects Schelling's discussion on compellence and deterrence. Schelling uses the example of burning escape bridges behind oneself to demonstrate commitment to purpose (and to deter the opponent).⁴ In the three previous cases, *the coercers* burned the "bridges" behind Gaddafi and Hussein and forced them into a death match. This dilemma illustrates the criticality of understanding the opponent's values in order to avoid cutting off all avenues of escape. Karl Mueller reminds us, "Conceding to the coercer's demands will sometimes appear to represent a death sentence to enemy leaders, either figuratively or

⁴ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 70.

literally, which may be sufficient to make them resist no matter how costly and pointless doing so becomes.”⁵

Coercion is fundamentally about manipulating behavior through the imposition of costs. Each of these cases demonstrates this fundamental fact. Where the coercers desired limited behaviors, the probability of coercion increased. When the coercer demonstrated its own commitment to coerce the adversary into an untenable outcome, coercion had little chance for success.

Communication

The coercers had mixed success in clearly communicating threats and desired behaviors to their adversaries. Successful coercion requires clear transmission and reception of threats and of the desired future behavior of the adversary.⁶ However, the opponent’s receipt of the message was often shaded by inconsistencies in coercer messages and behavior patterns cemented over time.

A prominent example of such inconsistency was the events leading up to the engagement in Kosovo. Early Bush Administration threats to use force to stop Serbian aggression in Kosovo were largely empty. Public debate over action and NATO’s inability to reach consensus over force levels were both examples of a coercer unable to communicate clear threats. Wallace Thies argues that policy debates, an important part of communication, affect if, when, and/or how long an opponent will fight.⁷ Furthermore, because the opponent made such judgments based on what happened before the first bomb, inconsistent threats diluted the efficacy of coercion.⁸ Prior to the start of Allied Force, Milosevic exhibited such judgment and viewed NATO threats as

⁵ Karl Mueller. “The Essence of Coercive Air Power: A Primer for Military Strategists.” *Air and Space Power Journal, Chronicles Online Journal*, Maxwell AFB, Alabama: Air University Press, September 17, 2001, <http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/mueller.html>, 7.

⁶ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 75.

⁷ Wallace J. Thies, “Compellence Failure or Coercive Success? The Case of NATO and Yugoslavia,” *Comparative Strategy*, 22:243-267, (2003), 257.

⁸ Thies, “Compellence Failure or Coercive Success?” 257.

weak. Only after NATO *demonstrated* its commitment by carrying out its threats was it able to overcome initial weakness.

Inconsistent public debate also diminished the effectiveness of coercion in Libya. Public Obama Administration debates over Libyan intervention underlined the bifurcation within the Administration. This public bifurcation, while good to ensure democratic governments act responsibly, likely communicated uncertainty or ambiguity to Gaddafi. The Administration's implicit regime change goals clouded the communication of the explicit goals of protecting innocent civilians. Gaddafi's fight to the end demonstrated the success of communicating implicit goals because it appears he felt he had no choice.

Message consistency requires coercers to be vigilant of how and what they communicate over an entire coercive campaign. In the cases where coercion occurred over many years, patterns of behavior developed that clouded communication. For example, many years of Iraqi deceit contributed to poor communication. Even as Hussein's government was attempting to comply, established patterns of deceit obscured communication. Coercion may have worked, but the U.S. was unable to see a path to success. The value of message consistency was also critical in Serbia. Hollow threats toward Milosevic and empty demonstrations of force did not communicate significant threats. Message inconsistency again diluted the threats and forced NATO to communicate through force to ensure commitment was clear.

Communication between governments in today's media saturated environment will always be difficult and complex. However, these cases demonstrated the need for consistency and clarity. These cases also reflect the importance of communication to bolster the credibility of threats. As Schelling declared, "the hardest part [of coercion] is communicating our own intentions."⁹

⁹ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 35.

Capability

Coercers must have the necessary and appropriate means to carry out the threats in order to coerce successfully. The necessary means existed in all cases to carry out coercive air exclusion zones. The U.S. demonstrated in each case that the means were available. The addition of NATO and other international forces strengthened the overall capability. Even when coercers considered ground forces, there should have been no doubt the capability existed to enforce an exclusion zone. However, the cases demonstrate one should consider the appropriateness of means regardless of coercive instrument.

The environment in which airpower was used correlated to its efficacy. Air exclusion zones succeeded against locatable targets. Libya and Iraq were examples of environments conducive to AEZs. Their desert environment made hiding from airpower difficult. Serbia's mountains and dense forests, on the other hand, posed a greater challenge for airpower. As illustrated in the cases, these environmental issues constrained airpower effectiveness. However, in each case, the environment was not the final arbiter in success.

Aside from environmental limitations, the opponent's perception of the AEZ effectiveness also influenced coercion in all three cases. This chapter previously discussed Milosevic's belief that he would be able to outlast coercion via air exclusion zone. Like Milosevic, Hussein discounted the ultimate effectiveness of air strikes. Both thought they could withstand and outlast their opponents. Similarly, Gaddafi's actions lead one to conclude he held similar views of AEZs.¹⁰ The on-going debate of the coercive value of AEZs contributes to such perceptions.¹¹ For example, one could anticipate that future analysts will argue the OUP AEZ merely provided cover for the real coercive force: the anti-Gaddafi force. Time will tell whether and how views of AEZ coercion might change.

¹⁰ Gaddafi survived the 1986 U.S. air strikes.

¹¹ Pape, Stigler, Byman and Waxman, Lake and others continue debate over the effectiveness of air power in coercion.

The coercers in all cases possessed military superiority over their adversary yet did not always succeed. As Byman and Waxman note, “success in coercive contests seldom turns on superior firepower.”¹² While coercion may not turn on firepower, the previous cases did demonstrate that force was often a necessary coercive instrument. In each case, when opponents failed to respond to non-military coercive instruments, coercers needed firepower to increase the cost of non-compliance with coercer demands. Thus, where coercion succeeded, the coercer matched firepower within a sound coercive strategy.

Case Review—Coercive Mechanisms

The following table (Table 2) complements the previous summary and captures the factors relating to the application of the four coercive mechanisms. It is important to remember that the table focuses on the attempts to trigger the various mechanisms through air exclusions zones. The reader will note that air exclusion zones did little to affect the weakening and decapitation mechanisms. The highlighted factors demonstrate the degree by which AEZs contributed to triggering a behavioral change through the specified mechanism.

¹² Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 229.

Table 2: Case Summary: Coercive Mechanisms

Coercive Mechanisms	Case: Iraq	Case: Kosovo	Case: Libya
Weakening	- Scant evidence of direct attempts at using AEZs to coerce through weakening	- At most AEZs had incidental role	- Unfeasible given Gaddafi's lack of care for Libyan people
Direct Pressure	- Little evidence that the coalition directly targeted Hussein as a means of coercion	- AEZ weakened Serbia but little evidence to support direct pressure as a mechanism of coercion	- Incidental at most—Gaddafi may have felt pressure from strikes in/around Tripoli
Denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective when Hussein's strategy employed armed forces to achieve goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Examples: ONW, OVW - Less effective as Hussein's strategy shifted away from military means to achieve its goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Examples: outlast sanctions, avoid inspections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Likely not a sufficient mechanism for coercion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Only ground forces could directly counter Serbian strategy in Kosovo -- No conclusive evidence that ground invasion significantly entered into Milosevic's calculus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important in protecting innocent civilians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Gaddafi relied on army to crush rebellion -- NATO targeted Libyan Army to deny Gaddafi's strategy - Little evidence of Gaddafi changed behavior through denial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Regime change indicates failure of coercion
Political Destabilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential high payoff—regime security was what Hussein's—but employed by coalition - Hussein feared uprisings but coalition did not actively attempt to trigger mechanism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Political considerations (balance of power) were a factor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary elements of coercion in Kosovo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Striking dual-use targets pressured elite power base -- Eroding power base support forced behavior change -- Limited goals (not Milosevic regime change) gave negotiating space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible example of coercion due to political destabilization (popular unrest) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- NATO provided security umbrella for uprising to flourish (symbiotic with denial) -- Coercer goals influential in final outcome (regime change vs. negotiated settlement)

Source: Author's Original Work

Weakening and Direct Pressure

There is little evidence to suggest the coercers applied significant pressure to trigger the weakening and direct pressure mechanisms though air exclusion zones across the cases. In all three cases, the leaders were largely unconcerned with the overall welfare of their country; thus, the destruction of supporting infrastructure to weaken the country would have been ineffective. This follows Byman and Waxman's supposition: "Many autocratic governments care little about the well-being of the country as a whole."¹ Because weakening coerces the target by manipulating his concern for the overall power and prosperity of his country, this mechanism was of little value.

Decapitation, while valuable for regime change goals, is politically sensitive and difficult to achieve with air power.² Although command and control targets may offer a corollary benefit of killing the opponent, the coercers in the previous cases did not threaten decapitation as a means to manipulate behavior. Chapter 1 highlighted that coercive mechanisms often occur in parallel. In the preceding cases, weakening and deception mechanisms were largely incidental to the parallel effects of the denial and political destabilization mechanisms.

Denial

Denial succeeds when the coercer can affect the adversary's strategic vulnerabilities.³ Air exclusion zones were effective across cases where the opponent's strategic vulnerabilities were his fielded forces. Coercers found success when AEZs could deny the opponents use of their fielded forces to achieve their goals.

¹ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 77.

² Byman and Waxman highlight the political complications of decapitation, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 75.

³ Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 30.

Several engagements in Iraq and Libya illustrate the effectiveness of coercion through denial. Hussein relied on his military forces in three separate engagements: attempting to control the Kurds, renewing aggression toward Kuwait and crushing the Shi'a rebellion. The West successfully compelled Hussein to stop belligerent actions in the first two engagements and precluded the further use of military force to suppress the Shia revolt in the last one. Likewise, Gaddafi's primary means of stopping the rebellion was to crush it with his army. The OUP AEZ prevented this from happening.

Coercion was less effective in Iraq when Hussein did not rely on military strategies. The best example of this is the denial of inspections. The military played little role in keeping inspectors out; thus, coercing Hussein through AEZ air strikes against military targets had little if any coercive effect.

Another common theme across cases is the relationship between air and ground forces and the potential effectiveness of a denial strategy. The NATO ground threat in Kosovo was suspect at best and is not useful evidence denial worked. However, in other cases, ground threats were an important factor in succeeding at denial. Operation Vigilant Warrior in Iraq is an excellent example. Moreover, denial was a significant factor in the Libyan success, although in that case, the anti-Gaddafi rebel forces provided the ground threat. Regardless, a common theme across cases was the efficacy of AEZs increased when a ground threat was credible. This evidence reinforces Byman and Waxman's point regarding the debate over air power's singular ability to compel:

In part this is a false debate, because the threat of air strikes never exists in a vacuum...there are always background threats—possible war options, nuclear scenarios and so on—that weigh on adversary decision makers...The better approach is to ask how and under what conditions the use of threat of air strikes contributes to coercive strategies.⁴

⁴ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 99.

Political Destabilization

Although it possessed a significant potential for success, coercers in this study did not widely attempt to trigger coercion through political destabilization. Only in Kosovo does significant evidence exist that political destabilization contributed to coercion. Through the striking of dual-use targets, NATO pressured Milosevic's power base sufficiently to force his capitulation on Kosovo. The situation in Libya offers a variation on this destabilization theme.

Although primarily a denial effort, the OUP AEZ did contribute to the spread of popular unrest and likely affected Gaddafi's decision calculus. By protecting civilian populations, citizens unhappy with Gaddafi's regime had more freedom to rise up and contest his rule. The political destabilization complemented the denial efforts in the Libyan case. Although popular unrest did not remove Hussein, the parallels between Libya and Iraq reveal a possible missed opportunity.

Popular unrest clearly unnerved Saddam Hussein. His brutal crackdowns on Kurdish and Shi'a minorities demonstrate the degree of his concern. However, the U.S. and its allies did not explore using popular unrest as a mechanism of coercion. The West missed an opportunity to use the Shi'a uprisings in a similar manner. Broader political reasons influenced those decisions.⁵ Had the U.S. wanted to coerce, fomenting popular unrest may have been viable to pressure Hussein.⁶

From the cases, political destabilization proved to be another viable mechanism to achieve coercion. As in all cases of coercion, the success of this mechanism depends on various aspects of the target. However,

⁵ Regional power balance was a key consideration.

⁶ Byman, Pollack and Waxman advocate a similar position in Daniel Byman, Kenneth Pollack and Matthew Waxman, "Coercing Saddam Hussein: Lessons from the Past," *Survival*, vol. 40, no.3 (Autumn 1998): 127-51. Byman et al argue for supporting a "viable insurgency" to target Saddam's fears over unrest, p. 146.

coercers in these cases tended toward denial as it complemented the strengths of air exclusion zones. The lessons of Kosovo and Libya and the possibilities in Iraq demonstrate the allure of political destabilization as an alternative method if denial is ineffective.

The coercive success of AEZ in the three cases studies reflects coercion theory in general. As one should expect, a lack of credibility, inconsistent communication or inappropriate capability adversely affected coercion. Likewise, manipulating the proper mechanism was critical to success. Where coercers could affect opponent pressure points with the correct mechanism, coercion probability increased. Where opponents' behavior relied on more elusive means or methods, coercion through AEZ was less potent.

This study thus far has focused on understanding the AEZ as a coercive instrument. Given the previous cases, air exclusion zones certainly offer the coercer an effective coercive tool. The last step in this study requires harnessing the above evaluation in order to apply the findings to tease out the final determination of the efficacy of the AEZs.

Conclusion

This project started with the supposition that coercive strategies employing air exclusion zones can be more effective and efficient than coercive strategies relying on major combat operations under certain circumstances. To assess the validity of that position, the study analyzed past engagements utilizing air exclusion zones as the primary means to coerce the opponent. The analysis leveraged coercion theory in two distinct manners. First, it assessed the ability of the air exclusion zone in each case to achieve the criteria for coercion: a credible threat, a clearly communicated threat and the capability to carry out said threat. Second, the analysis reviewed the mechanism by which the coercer translated a viable threat into successful coercion. The possible coercive mechanisms used in this project were weakening, direct pressure, denial and political destabilization. The analysis then compared data across cases to determine commonalities that influenced the degree of coercion. From this comparison, one can make the following conclusions.

All else being equal, air exclusion zones are more efficient than resorting to major combat operations. This conclusion assumes similar goals and coercive outcomes independent of the chosen instrument. In comparison, the cost of employing an AEZ is nearly an order of magnitude less than the cost of major combat operations. Operation Iraqi Freedom cost the United States over \$800 billion dollars.¹ At just over \$10 billion, the coercive effort in Iraq from 1991 to 2003 was the most expensive AEZ effort.² Allied Force and Unified Protector each cost the United States less than \$3 billion.³ The monetary efficiency of the air

¹ Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," *Report for Congress RL31110*, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress (March 29, 2011), summary page.

² Alfred B. Prados, "Iraqi Challenges and U.S. Responses: March 1991 through October 2002," *Report for Congress RL31641*, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress (November 20, 2002), 27.

³ Steve Bowman, "Kosovo and Macedonia: U.S. and Allied Military Operations," *Report for Congress IB10027*, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress (July 8,

exclusion zone over major combat operations is clear. Monetary outlays alone, however, are not the only factor in concluding AEZ more efficient than major combat operations.

Air exclusion zones are also more efficient from a non-monetary resource standpoint. The most significant difference is the human toll. The U.S. military alone lost almost 4,500 personnel by the conclusion of OIF.⁴ There were no combat related deaths in any of the cases studied herein.⁵ In addition to the human cost, the materiel cost favors air exclusion zones. Notionally, the wear on military systems and long-term personnel cost from major combat operations are significantly more than the air exclusion zones.⁶

It likely comes as no shock that major combat operations exact a significantly higher toll on state resources than air exclusion zones. Moreover, if the outcomes were clearly equivalent, one should always favor air exclusions zones as a coercive instrument. Yet, are air exclusion zones an effective coercive instrument? The answer to this question requires further discussion

2003), 8-9, Devin Dwyer, "US Military Intervention in Libya Cost At Least \$896 Million," Political Punch (blog), *ABC News*, August 22, 2011, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2011/08/us-military-intervention-in-libya-cost-at-least-896-million/>.

⁴ Catherine Lutz, "US and Coalition Casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan," Watson Institute, Brown University (June 6, 2011), <http://costsofwar.org/sites/default/files/articles/11/attachments/Lutz%20US%20and%20Coalition%20Casualties.pdf>, 1.

⁵ No combat-related deaths in Allied Force, Department of Defense Report to Congress, "Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After Action Report," January 31, 2000. None reported for pre-OIF Iraq, "The No-Fly Zone War' (U.S./U.K.-Iraq Conflict)1991-2003," historyguy.com, http://www.historyguy.com/no-fly_zone_war.html. No reported combat deaths in Libya.

⁶ "Based on current patterns of benefit claims and medical usage, it is estimated that the total present value of such costs for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans over the next 40 years is in the range of \$600 billion to \$1 trillion." Linda J. Bilmes, "Current and Projected Future Costs of Caring for Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars," Cost of War Project, Eisenhower Study Group, Brown University (June 13, 2011), 1. "An estimated \$17 billion-plus worth of military equipment is destroyed or worn out each year, blasted by bombs, ground down by desert sand and used up to nine times the rate in times of peace." Ann Scott Tyson, "U.S. Army Battling To Save Equipment", *Washington Post*, December 5, 2006.

In short, the evidence suggests that air exclusion zones are effective coercive instruments. Allied Force is perhaps the best example of the coercive ability of air exclusion zones. The AEZs clearly affected Milosevic's behavior. Yet, one must be wary of binary judgments of effectiveness. Remembering Byman and Waxman's warning over debating the coercive ability of a single instrument, AEZs rely on the background threat environment to be effective.⁷ Air exclusion zones are significant contributors to coercion but certain conditions increase their effectiveness.

The analysis determined that the coercer goals are the first such condition affecting the efficacy of air exclusion zones. In the cases where the desired adversary behavior required the adversary to relinquish power, coercion proved difficult. Conversely, coercion succeeded given more limited coercer goals as confirmed in the Iraqi case. When the goal in Iraq was containing Hussein, the air exclusion zones deterred Hussein's regime from regional aggression. When deterrence failed, the AEZs could rapidly compel Hussein to withdraw as he did following Vigilant Warrior. Yet when goals shifted to Iraqi regime change, coercion was nearly impossible. This conclusion is also true in Libya. Implicit regime change goals in Libya may have forced Gaddafi into a corner—a fight to the end was the only option. The likelihood of threatening costs that could overcome Gaddafi's fear of losing power was minimal. Thus, if a coercer's threats are viable, coercion varies based on the limitations of the coercer's goals.

Likewise, NATO's limited goals in Allied Force increased the probability of coercion. NATO did not seek Milosevic's removal from power. Able to accept an autonomous Kosovo and remain in power, Milosevic had some room to maneuver. Without such options, Milosevic

⁷ Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman. *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35.

may have held out and forced NATO to use ground forces. Evidence suggests that ground force use in Serbia may have been deleterious to the Allied Force coalition and exploitable by Milosevic. Thus, it is doubtful coercion would have succeeded had the explicit goal of NATO been to remove the Milosevic regime.

From the analysis, a second condition that increased the probability of coercive success for air exclusion zones was the commitment of the coercer. In the previous cases where the behavior desired by the coercers was severely antithetical to an adversary's goals, coercive engagements needed a strong and credible foundation. High levels of commitment thus became critical to success. However, the shadow of the past loomed over any coercive engagement. Patterns of behavior cemented perceptions of coercer commitment and influenced threat credibility.

All three cases underline the connection between coercer commitment and successful coercion. Hussein believed that the U.S. did not have the resolve to commit more force than the air exclusion zone. Milosevic held similar views based on his own lessons from Bosnia and Iraq. On the other hand, Gaddafi's abandonment of WMDs and terrorism after 2003 would seem to bolster the point that he saw the credibility of U.S. threats against him. Yet, Gaddafi also likely viewed air exclusion zones as weak coercive instruments—a view fostered by his survival following the 1986 U.S. air strikes against Libya.

Overcoming the opponent's perception of weak coercer commitment was difficult for the coercers across cases. Past patterns of behavior further cemented future expectations. A general distaste for military action coupled with a predilection for hollow threats did little to change the target's behavior. Only when the coercer carried through with significant increases in violence did the adversary alter his behavior. This proportional relationship between commitment and coercion reflects

the criticality of resolve in any coercive equation. This is no less true for coercion using air exclusion zones.

Third, the study reveals that the coercive mechanism triggered by the air exclusion zones significantly affected coercive success. As previously discussed, air exclusion zones are uniquely suited to trigger the denial mechanism, especially when the opponent's strategy relies on military means to achieve his ends. Thus, the probability of coercing with an air exclusion zone was proportional to the degree the denial mechanism triggered a behavioral change. Yet, denial was not the only coercive mechanism that air exclusion zones triggered effectively.

An interesting conclusion from the analysis is that the political destabilization mechanism offered a strong, but largely overlooked, potential for successful coercion. Where denial was a natural proclivity of air exclusion zones, political destabilization uniquely affected authoritarian regimes. This study's finding regarding the potential success of political destabilization through air exclusion zones confirms Byman and Waxman's similar conclusion.⁸ If air exclusion zones can pressure opponents through either their regime's power base as in Kosovo, or via popular unrest as in Libya, they have an increased probability of success.

Finally, the evidence supports the assertion that AEZ success is not exclusive of ground force or other complementary coercive instruments. A critical factor in choosing an AEZ is the coercive gain the AEZ provides relative the other options such as ground force.⁹ Because an air exclusion zone is a more limited commitment of force, it is likely a more feasible option than ground forces. However, the coercer should only utilize an AEZ if it provides a determinate increase in coercive pressure. Moreover, an AEZ may require ground forces, or the threat of their use, as a backstop to achieve escalation dominance. The opponent

⁸ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 45.

⁹ Byman and Waxman, *Dynamics of Coercion*, 37.

is less likely to attempt to escalate if a credible ground threat exists. Thus, ground force threats increase the efficacy of AEZ through this symbiotic relationship. Coercers should be wary to enter a coercive engagement with any use of force unless willing to ensure escalation dominance.

The earlier discussion above established AEZs as relatively efficient uses of coercive force. This study also concluded above that AEZ are effective coercive instruments as long as the coercer is aware of the conditions that increase the AEZ's coercive effectiveness. Thus, we reach the final answer to the opening question: air exclusion zones are an effective and efficient alternative to major combat operations under certain conditions. The aforementioned conditions are certainly constraints on the proper employment of AEZs. Nevertheless, given the cost of blood and treasure of major combat operations it behooves U.S. leaders to approach future coercive engagements warily. Air exclusion zones are a feasible alternative coercive method, but only when one implements them with full contextual understanding of the potential coercive engagement.

Choosing to coerce via air exclusion zones implies that the coercer possesses a force structure commensurate with the AEZ requirements. Air exclusion zones often require months or years to coerce. The scale of these AEZ campaigns means that coercers must embrace several important aspects of successful coercion through AEZs.

First, the coercer must possess the means to match the potential dwell time required to achieve coercion. Generally, air exclusion zones tend toward a "perpetual patrol problem."¹⁰ The U.S. Air Force learned this valuable lesson during the parallel operations in Iraq and Kosovo. High deployment tempos to the Persian Gulf strained the force to the point that the U.S. Air Force transformed its force deployment

¹⁰ Alexander Bernard. "Lesson from Iraq and Bosnia on the Theory and Practice of No-fly zones," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, September 2004, 463.

mechanism to accommodate.¹¹ This transformation brought a needed level of predictability. As air forces modernize, remaining cognizant of the unique operational effects of AEZs on personnel and equipment will be important to future success.

Second, coercers must have the capacity to execute the AEZ and still maintain its strategic focus elsewhere. This will be especially difficult with the near-term reality of constrained budgets. In 2002, RAND analysts estimated the U.S. Air Force required 20 fighter wings to support various small conflicts of the 1990s.¹² Given the U.S. Air Force possesses slightly more than that number today, the margin of error is slim, especially if the U.S. military must execute an AEZ and support larger scale deterrence efforts elsewhere.

If NATO is to continue its active role, member nations will also need to consider NATO force structure holistically. Unified Protector demonstrated European members' lack of capacity.¹³ Should the U.S. or other NATO leaders hesitate to provide support in the future, NATO would have difficulty executing an AEZ without a significant force structure investment. NATO members must heed U.S. Defense Secretary Gates' warning of "a dim if not dismal future" if they cannot increase their abilities to provide necessary military capacity.¹⁴

Finally, the adversary's location will affect the coercer's force structure. Coercers may need the "reach" to maintain a presence over target. This "tyranny of distance" problem requires a force that can

¹¹ The USAF developed the Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF) concept in response to the strain of executing AEZs over Iraq. For a detailed analysis of the EAF creation, see Richard G. Davis, *Anatomy of a Reform: The Expeditionary Aerospace Force*, Air Force History and Museums Program (2003).

¹² Donald Stevens, John Gibson, and David Ochmanek, "Modernizing the Combat Forces: Near-term Options," in *Strategic Appraisal: United States Air and Space Power in the 21st Century*, ed. Zalmay Khalilzad and Jeremy Shapiro, (Santa Monica, CA: 2002), 139.

¹³ Thom Shanker and Steven Erlanger, "Blunt U.S. Warning Reveals Deep Strains in NATO," *New York Times*, June 10, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/11/world/europe/11nato.html?pagewanted=all>.

¹⁴ Shanker and Erlanger, "Blunt U.S. Warning Reveals Deep Strains in NATO."

execute an AEZ without basing access near the target. Unified Protector was a glaring example of this problem. The transit distances required significant combat support assets (air refueling, airborne command and control, etc.) because NATO had limited use of bases near Libya. The Libyan AEZ had little chance of success without the available support force. While air exclusion zones are an effective tool, leaders must be cautious to ensure their national means can support using AEZ in a coercive strategy. Just as hollow commitment translates to hollow threats; hollow forces result in hollow air exclusion zones.

Final Thoughts

Although this study contrasts airpower *vis a vis* land power within its analytical framework, it does not intend to argue coercion via air forces is “better” than coercion via ground forces. Instead, it concludes that coercion via air exclusion zone can be a more effective and efficient option in lieu of ground forces under the right circumstances. Yet, coercion succeeds within a broad strategy that includes all aspects of power and coercive instruments. Thus, one should not go away from this study concluding that air exclusion zones are the only necessary method of coercive force. One should embrace air exclusion zones as a valuable tool in the leader’s coercive toolbox. As Eliot Cohen famously wrote, “Airpower is an unusually seductive form of military strength, in part because, like modern courtship, it appears to offer gratification without commitment.”¹⁵ But, if leaders employ AEZs with awareness of the success criteria and within a broad coercive strategy, they should significantly increase the probability of coercive success.

¹⁵ Eliot Cohen, “The Mystique of U.S. Air Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb., 1994), pp. 109-124, 109. The author feels a thesis on coercive air power would not be complete without this quote.

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